



**The National University of Ireland Maynooth**

**Paradigms of Irishness for Young People in Dublin**

**A thesis submitted by Joseph Moffatt, B.A., M.A.,  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Sociology Department  
Faculty of Social Science**

**Research Supervisor: Mary Corcoran**

**Head of Department: Jan Gray**

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# Abstract

The history of Ireland highlights how Irish identity has proved to be both an emotive and divisive force in Irish society. Events in both pre and post-independent Ireland point out how central Irishness has been within Irish society and also highlights how a sense of national identity has often been assumed as shared, natural and fundamentally taken for granted. Accepting that hegemonic understanding of Irishness change, so in 1900 – when Ireland was of course part of the United Kingdom – the dominant sense of Irishness may differ to that of 1971 or 2004, there can be no avoiding the position that people in Ireland remain firmly socialised through a discourse of nationalised identity.

The aim of this research is to investigate how young people engage with this nationalised identity and position their own self-understandings of Irishness. Following on from explaining young peoples' sense of identity this research formalises their understandings of Irishness into particular paradigms of Irish identity.

The findings show that though young people strongly identify with Irishness their understandings are often shifted around to accommodate varied meanings which can be implied of Irishness. Young people then hold both a solid and fluid sense of Irishness which allows shifting meanings of Irishness to fit contextual situations. Young people may overwhelming identity with Irishness but in comparison to how emotive and essentially stable Irishness was for much of the Twentieth century, it is fair to say young people embrace a brand of Irishness that might be termed Light Irishness.

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# Introduction

This research project has developed from both my general interest in Irish identity - *what is it to be Irish?* - and my interest in how changes in Irish society, particularly certain changes over the past twenty years – such as heightened commercialisation, mediaisation and secularisation – have impacted upon people in Ireland. Though it may sound an overworked cliché Irish society and Dublin has – before my eyes – undergone remarkable change from the late Eighties, when I was a teenager in Dublin, to the present. If someone had left Dublin or Ireland or had visited either in the late 1980s and returned again in the twenty-first century they would find a very different Ireland and a very different Dublin. Certainly Dublin, but also other urban and rural pockets, has undergone a remarkable commercial facelift and something of a shift in values. The commercial facelift can be seen in the transformation of the city centre from a grey Eighties sheen to a new modernist cityscape. The signs of increased wealth are also readily evident. When I was a teenager only one person on my road had a car; now only two households do not have cars and indeed some households have more than one car. From the explosion of new retailing outlets and car ownership to the improvements in infrastructure – from roads to tourist facilities – to sporting grounds – such as the impressive re-development of Croke Park or the ongoing development of Lansdowne Road – Dublin and Ireland have changed. Dublin has also changed in volume and character; there has been a large increase in both the urban population and particularly the Dublin population, and there is probably no suburban part of Dublin that is untouched by new residential builds, seen for instance, on what were once people's front or back gardens. Dublin shares with other vibrant cities a sense of pace, and certainly for some, a sense of opportunity.

Finding a very different Ireland or Dublin implies something of finding a very different Irish person. Even the power of certain institutions – from the Catholic Church to educational institutions or the GAA – to shape who we are and dictate to people is now more openly challenged than it was in the 1980s. Suggesting to someone in Eighties Ireland that *God Save the Queen* should, or indeed would be played in Croke Park in 2007, would have resulted in ridicule as would the suggestion that people in Ireland would have comparable incomes to people in other developed countries. There is now more money to spend and more credit on offer in twenty-first century Ireland than there was in 1980s Ireland; there has been a notable increase in

the immigrant population over this period, radically reversing embedded notions of Ireland as an emigrant country, and even the sports we popularly watch have altered – witness the remarkable explosion in the popularity of rugby over the past 5-10 years. If Dublin seems different to me in the early twenty-first century compared to the late twentieth century when I was a teenager, this is because it quite simply is different. If I regard Dublin, and the people in it, as having undergone change how must younger people feel, people who have been socialised into an Ireland that almost constantly discursively emphasises how changed Irish identity is presently from how Irish identity was in the past, even the recent past? When not just a majority but the overwhelming majority of my family have been born in England because family members quite simply had to leave Ireland, here was a generation of young people faced with the alternative of actually staying in Ireland, an option never available to members of my own family.

Initially my interest in examining Irish identity was drawn around the investigating how immigrants and immigration was impacting upon understandings of Irishness. However I soon realised that it would be impossible for me to consider Irishness from just this specific perspective as it would fail to take into account far more general processes that shape understandings of who we Irish are, or indeed from the wider compass of Irish identity, how a multicultural Ireland might be redrawing Irishness because of the many varied elements to identity formation and articulation. Emphasising just how varied Irishness is and has been, one simply has to consider both the interplay and the tension that often existed historically between individual notions of Irishness and what might be termed societal notions of Irishness. Though there has typically been variations in how people understand Irishness – how Yeats or O’Casey, Connolly or Lemass, Beckett or Luke Kelly, Harry Boland or Emmet may have each differently understood what it means, for them, to be Irish – the late nineteenth century saw the solidifying of Irishness around particular characteristics; notably the notion that Irishness essentially means Catholic, that Britishness was a fundamental cultural Other to Irishness and that upon Independence any Irish government should promote, and be popularly supported, in a policy of Gaelicising Ireland. One should not underestimate the effects or the power that this notion of Irishness has had upon people in Ireland. My mother was educated through Irish in certain subjects but as my mother never understood Irish she failed completely to understand the subjects and left school with what can only be considered a limited education.

Emphasising how uneven and varied Irish identity is, it can be accepted that though the general historical notion of Irishness held sway for a large part of the last century with a great many people it was also a notion of Irishness that was challenged for a large part of the last century – en masse by Irish unionists in the early part of the century and by, what are termed, modernisers in the latter part of the century. This challenge says nothing of how individual people – like my father or mother or grandmother, aunts or uncles – may have each only partially accepted or rejected traditionalised notions of Irishness and how other people in Ireland may have also accepted or rejected such a view of Irishness. If historically Irish identity has been contested and mixed then contemporary Irish identity - which has even more factors that go into the mix in making both *who I am* and *who we are* - must stand as an even more highly complex identity. Though I certainly cannot claim to have mastered this complex identity, this thesis offers some insights into how a small sample of young people in Dublin negotiate Irishness.

The thesis is spread over 11 chapters. The opening chapter looks at the discourse of Irish identity by situating two hegemonic conceptualisations of Irishness – the Traditional and the Modern Paradigm of Irishness. This will give the reader a general introduction into how people situate the meaning of Irishness and will highlight how conceptions of Irishness can and do change. Chapter 2 will deal with the various theories used to explain identity, touching on the work of Anderson and Giddens, and Chapter 3 is a methodological chapter charting how this research was conducted. The following chapters will then lay out how young people negotiate and position Irishness. Chapter 4 and 5 deal with themes that have certainly had an important historical effect upon Irishness; the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish language. Any reading of Irish history or identity from the late nineteenth century that failed to consider how Catholic identity or the general theme of Gaelicisation were mobilised to shape a distinct Irishness would be a very partial reading of Irish identity. It is important to consider what effects these two significant historical factors have upon contemporary understanding of identity because, obviously, both religion and the Irish language are social ingredients in contemporary Ireland. For instance the existence of a television station that broadcasts predominantly in the Irish language is something that was absent in my youth in the Eighties. Similarly, religious ceremonies – like marriage or baptism – remain far more popular than civil arrangements.

After considering how the Catholic Church and the Irish language may affect identity for young people the emphasis shifts in the following Chapter and deals with what young people

most immediately offer as their fore-grounded understanding of Irishness. Chapter 6 situates Irishness for young people within a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*, highlighting just how positively young people value Irishness. It is shown in this chapter how, generally, young people firmly embrace a sense of Irishness that emphasises themes such as *The Craic*, being *Welcoming* and being *Friendly*, so lacing notions of Irishness as being highly sociable. Chapter 7 looks at sports, which is certainly considered a vehicle for mobilising Irish identity for young people. Looking at Gaelic sports and soccer it will be shown how important sports can be in offering a sense of Irishness and emphasising something of young peoples' *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*.

The following three chapters could be considered as highlighting the Others, or partial Others, of Irishness – the American, the Immigrant and the Rural Other. The idea of finding a very different Irish person from that of a 1980s Irish person can certainly be seen here, most obviously in the context that there is no British Other. In my own teenage years in Dublin the notion that Britishness/Englishness was an Other to our own Irishness was certainly something understood, and most probably, something shared by a great many people in Ireland. The reason why there is no British Other to consider in this study is simply because young people do not project a radical Otherness onto Britishness; instead an Otherness is generally projected elsewhere. Again indicating a changed Irishness from that of the late twentieth century is the notion that America – of course containing the most celebrated Irish Diaspora - is an Other to Irishness. America can act as an Other because it affects so many young people on a daily basis, saturated with American television programmes and musical artists. Though young people welcome American entertainment there is sometimes an underlining negativity from some young people on what America is, and is doing to Irishness, that allows Irishness to be juxtaposed to American-ness. Though the idea of an Immigrant Other is hardly surprising given how racist Irish society has historical been it will be seen that young people can freely mix positive and negative views towards immigrants, where in one instance immigrants can be positionined as a negative Other to Irishness yet in another instance can be emphasised as showing how progressive contemporary Ireland must be. The penultimate chapter considers how notions and the practice of Irishness may differ between urban Ireland, in which all the sample are at least schooled, and rural Ireland. It will be seen in this chapter that though young people hold a plurality towards Irishness, many – particularly middle class young people, the majority of

whom hold idealised notions of Rural Ireland possible influenced by their attendance at Gaeltachts – monocultralise rural Ireland and project it as layered with the values of Traditional Irishness. This Chapter will show just how comfortable young people are in their urban Ireland with their own sense of Irishness even though rural Ireland is projected as containing True Irishness – Gaelic speaking and Roman Catholic. The final chapter will highlight through three different Paradigms what Irishness can mean for young people in early twenty-first century Dublin. Though the Paradigms can only ever be partial – as we will see young people can quite easily freely move between different meanings of Irishness – they are at least discussion points on how young people in Dublin can understand Irishness.

Having completed this project, and with this final chapter in mind, I can see both the diversity of Irishness held by young people but also the limitation in trying to formulate this diversity. Though I do not believe it is possible to capture the complete diversity of Irishness – to do so would of course require as a minimum a dialogue with every person in Ireland, to say nothing of people outside Ireland – there is considerable limitations in trying to fully examine the interconnecting qualities that make Irish identity diverse, multi-layered and multi-angled. Certainly if given this project to do again I would have approached it differently, so hoping to capture more fully what goes into peoples’ conceptualisations of Irishness. I would have tried to re-interview focus groups after one year and after two years and I would have liked to engaged with one-on-one interviewing hoping to chart both consistencies and changes that may have occurred in understanding Irishness, while also being considerate of how an individual dynamic – like the influence of family or friends or the media – affects how people understand themselves. Though the focus is on Dublin if it had been possible I would have also extended the research and moved outside Dublin and considered how other young people in other urban areas approach Irishness. Does Dublin have a particular dynamic that differs to how people in Limerick or Cork City understand Irishness? I would also have considered how people in rural areas engage with Irishness. What differences is there between how someone in Tallaght or Drimnagh understands Irishness to how someone in Laharn or Ballindine understands Irishness? These are of course big questions and to examine them would require a somewhat larger research team than myself. Such additional information would obviously have greatly extended the findings of this research but would also have probably seen this project extend into the twenty-

second century. These are questions that deserve some consideration but because of the limited nature of this research cannot be considered here.

This project has gone on for more years than I expected but one of the motivating features for me has been my continued interest in Irish identity. Though I cannot motivate anyone to think about who they are, or think about their identification towards collectivist bonds, be they national, gender, sporting, ethnic, class or whatever, I hope there is enough in what is written to keep the reader engaged and interested in how some young people in Dublin considered the theme of Irish identity.



# Chapter 1

## Two Irelands: Traditional and Modern

This chapter will introduce two conceptualisations of Irish identity that have informed the construction of Irishness in Twentieth-century Ireland; the Traditional Paradigm of Irishness and the more diffuse understandings of Irish identity suggested by a Modern Paradigm of Irishness. Both of these approaches apply a generality towards understanding Irish identity and it is important to appreciate that in my construction of these paradigms each, though capable of compelling identification, is representative of ideal-type notions towards Irish identity. In suggesting these two separate paradigms of Irish identity it should be understood that I am engaged in ‘a heuristic procedure that permits comparison and hypothesis formulation in the face of the extreme diversity and density of everyday life’ (Jenkins, 2004:120). The generality of each Paradigm may not necessarily deal with ‘extreme diversity and density of everyday life’ as it was or is in Ireland - there is an acceptance that neither paradigm can capture Irish identity in its totality - but the focus of this chapter is to generalise the social forces that have shaped, and continue to shape, understandings of what it may mean to be Irish. It is important not only to be aware of what was at one time generally taken to imply Irish identity but also to offer some grounding in what constituents formed or may presently suggest an influence upon Irish identity.

While what defines or helps construct national belonging can be contrasted from one nation to another it can be seen that a particular ‘common organising principle’ was employed at one time in Ireland attempting to exclusively shape Irish identity (Kearney, 1997:8). Historically, for part of the Nineteenth-century and for much of the Twentieth century, the social vision and practice of being Irish was homogenised largely around clearly understood and commonly accepted notions contained within what will be termed a Traditional Paradigm of Irishness. Mike

Cronin writes of how cultural nationalist organisations, which developed in the late Nineteenth-century, promoted a 'cohesiveness of cultural experience' that offered people 'a clear sense of an Irish identity' (2001:166). This 'clear sense' of identity coalesced within a common framework grounded by particular constituent markings. This chapter will consider four particularly important constituents of Irish identity under the Traditional Paradigm; Rural Ireland, the Irish language, Gaelic sports and the popular coupling of Catholic with Irishness. Though each constituent need not have necessarily inter-acted or even have been accepted by all people in Ireland as marking Irish identity - for instance Yeats may not have understood his own Irishness through any Catholic marking but he did somewhat understand Irishness through his espousal of Rural Ireland and the Irish language - the intention of this chapter is to describe how people could generally understand Irish identity and show how these markings acted to draw Irish identity within a particular framework.

These markings of being Irish were both idealised, for instance the ideological elevation of Rural Ireland as purified Irishness, and importantly practiced, as with the attempts to actively exclude particular identities from being Irish. The exclusion of certain identities from Irishness had of course real and lasting consequences for the conceptualisation of Irishness. For example Dunn and Hennessey point out that the Gaelicisation of Irish identity carried out formally since Independence had the result of alienating 'Unionists from their sense of Irishness' (1996:193). Being Irish under the control of the Traditional Paradigm, particularly when given the power of a centralised state to attempt to disseminate a particular identity, would allow negligible space for any identities that deviated from the norm of Irishness as Gaelic and essentially Catholic.

In outlining the contours of the Traditional Paradigm we shall draw from three leading Twentieth century figures: Padraig Pearse, Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera. The power to define the Irish Nation and its identity lay far more with these historical figures than with other Irish figures, like James Connolly, John Redmond or Edward Carson. Though Pearse, Collins and de Valera could each maintain different views towards who or what values should be, or should not be, included within a characterisation of being Irish, there is within each a shared understanding of the uniqueness of Irish identity. It will be shown that each reinforced an understanding of Irish identity that was projected as contained within the Gael and they importantly each shared the idea of Gaelicising Irish society and identity in any independent Ireland. The commitment to Gaelicising Irish society is particularly important given that de

Valera from 1932 until 1959 – with only two three-year periods as opposition leader - served as Taoiseach and certainly followed a selective policy of Gaelicisation, for instance Constitutionally placing the Irish language as the first language of Ireland even when only a minority language.

Sean Cronin, somewhat underlining the similarities between Pearse, Collins and de Valera but completely underlining how Irish identity was at one time generally understood, writes how:

Such narrow thinking [from such figures as Pearse, Collins and de Valera] led to blinkered vision [towards Irish identity]. Gaelic and Irish became synonymous terms, which they were not; then Gaelic and Catholic became synonymous, which they were not (1980:99)

This ‘blinkered vision’ and social determinism of the Traditional Paradigm can be measured against how the Modern Paradigm of Irishness can construct Irish identity.

Though the contours suggested of modernity are unquestionably contested (Giddens, 1987) - so of course is what may be inferred by or within the Modern Paradigm of Irishness - there does appear to be some consensus that from the 1960s Irish identity has been opened up to greater reflexivity, allowing for a re-articulation of Irish identity away from one mode towards a transformed mode, or more correctly modes, of Irish identity. The changed social conditions can be seen in how Garvin notes people in Ireland would have once interacted with religion:

Almost regardless of social class, most Irish people lived, until quite recently, in a world where the here after was very close and as real as the landscape around them (2004a:160).

At one time Irish people may have negotiated ‘the here after’, and the religious identity that goes with this on an immediate personal basis, but altered social conditions in contemporary Ireland - the secularisation of Irish society for instance - certainly suggest some distance with any notion that ‘the here after’ continues to be experienced collectively as anything of great importance.

The exclusivity of the Traditional Paradigm - being Irish is - is contested and socially challenged by the Modern Paradigm of Irishness, where being Irish is not, by inference, necessarily contained within some commitment to Gaelicism or Catholicism. It will be seen that under the Modern Paradigm contemporary Irish identity could be described as somewhat fractured. When the Traditional Paradigm had a distinct ability to define Irishness, the Modern Paradigm of Irishness does not have a similar capability of homogenising identity around fixed

points of identification, other than perhaps technical factors of modernity such as the structuring of the economy or political structures. Though the Modern Paradigm cannot define Irish identity as comprehensively as the Traditional Paradigm it is within this paradigm that a reflection of the dramatic social and cultural changes that have occurred in Ireland over the past forty years is seen. The opening of Irish identity allows for greater space and deliberation in both personal and collective constructions of being Irish; where collectively being Irish is radically repositioned away from a clearly delineated Traditional Paradigm and towards something approaching, achieving or even perhaps beyond modernity itself.

It will be argued that from the 1960s there has been a dual social project occurring in Ireland that has developed the Modern Paradigm. There has been a process of both de-rooting Irish identity from established points of identification, but also an attempt to root Irishness within other points of identity. To give shape to the Modern Paradigm I shall look at both how Irish identity has moved away from the Traditional Paradigm - unbinding Irishness - but also how Irish identity can continue to be bounded within a loose understanding. Though the unbinding and bounding may seem mutually exclusive, they are not; they are intertwined and mutually operable. For instance Irish identity may have become distanced from associating Irish identity as evenly experienced throughout Ireland but it has become bounded within a twenty-six county national identity. Similarly while being Irish may have once implied Catholic the bounded-ness of contemporary Irishness does not imply Catholicism - though it can of course for some - but is rather bounded by the experience, if not necessarily always the belief, in secularisation. The bounded and unbinding of Irish identity addresses not only how Irish identity can move beyond the Traditional Paradigm but addresses important influences that shape identity for young people. For instance all of the constituent markings examined under the Traditional Paradigm still play some part in constructing identity in contemporary Ireland but would not be expected to lead to an automatic view that the Traditional Paradigm must therefore be the hegemonic understanding of contemporary Ireland. We shall begin our investigation into Irishness with the consideration of the Traditional Paradigm of Irishness, as it is this understanding of being Irish which dominated Irish identification for the largest part of the Twentieth-century.

## 1.1 The Traditional Paradigm of Irishness

Permeating the Traditional Paradigm are fixed notions of diffuse Gaelicism. We get an impression of how Irish identity was constructed as fixed and innate from a statement from the Gaelic Annual of 1907-1908:

The Irish Celt is distinguished among the races for height and strength, manly vigour and womanly grace; despite wars and domestic disability, the stamina of the race has survived in almost pristine condition. The ideal Gael is a matchless athlete, sober, pure in mind, speech and deed, self-possessed, self-reliant, self-respecting, loving his religion and his country with a deep and restless love, earnest in thought and effective in action (Corry quoted in Sugden and Bairner, 1993:29).

Such an essentialised view of identity is replete with the notion of a distinguished racial boarder and a permanency attached to the concept of both the male and female 'Gael'. The singular sounding 'loving his religion' - no doubt 'his' Roman Catholic religion - may point at a connection of being Irish with being specifically Catholic and obviously denies the plurality of religious practices, and identities, within Ireland. Being Irish can be seen as an integrative process that connects different factors of identity into a programmed whole; an 'ideal Gael' was physically distinct, patriotic and imbued with what would seem Catholic social teachings.

The social environment and discourse around Irish identity in late Nineteenth century and early Twentieth century Ireland lends itself to the reinforcement of Irish identity around this general notion of some 'ideal Gael'. In the writings and statements of three formative Irish nationalist figures - Pearse, Collins and de Valera - a shared impression is given on how understandings of Irish identity connects with this 'ideal Gael'. For instance a mode of racialised Gael provided both a marker and measurement of *authentic* Irishness for Collins:

We are now free in name. The extent to which we become free in fact and secure our freedom again will be the extent to which we become Gaels again (1968:100).

Collins, somewhat like de Valera, placed *innate* realised Irishness in rurality, anti-materialism and traditionalism:

In the island of Achill, impoverished as the people are, hard as their lives are, difficult as the struggle for existence is, the outward aspect is a pageant. One may

see processions of young women riding down on the island ponies to collect sand from the seashore, or gathering in the turf, dressed in their shawls and in their brilliantly-coloured skirts made of material spun, woven, and dyed, for over a thousand years. Their cottages also are little changed. They remain simple and picturesque. It is only in such places that one gets a glimpse of what Ireland may become again, when the beauty may be something more than a pageant, will be the outward sign of a prosperous and happy Gaelic life (Collins, 1968:99).

As with de Valera's pillared St. Patrick's Day address, Collins visioning 'of what Ireland may become again' also involved a particular economic understanding of achieving Irishness – ruralist, economically self-sufficient and fundamentally anti-materialist. One can also see the historical continuity of Irish identity suggested by Collins 'thousand years' and how Irishness, as practiced in the past, can become both a motivation and a point to which the whole of Ireland may one day again 'become'.

Pearse, along with Collins, also presented Irishness as connected to the Gael. The Gael, for Pearse, is the container of Irish identity, without the Gael there is no understanding of what it may be to be Irish and Irish identity would be a social invention without the core cultural and racial essence offered by the 'unconquered Gael' (Pearse, 1976:64). Collins can also certainly be seen as reinforcing the notion of Gaelicism, though unlike Pearse he sees it as an everlasting quality, when stating:

The Gaelic soul of the Irish people still lives. In itself it is indestructible. But its qualities are hidden, besmirched, by that which has been imposed upon us, just as the fine, splendid surface of Ireland is besmirched by our towns and villages (1968:99)

The 'indestructible' essentialisation of Gaelic identity that Collins presents also points towards the artificial modernised constructiveness of popular identity 'imposed' upon Ireland and affecting Irish identity. In Collins one finds both what it is to be Irish and also the distance that Irish people have travelled from Collins understanding of Irishness.

De Valera can also be judged as having emphasised Irishness around particular themes:

The dominant ideology which informed Mr. de Valera's [social and cultural] vision was the restoration of a rural, Catholic, Gaelic society, which would

facilitate the energetic pursuit of its [Ireland's] linguistic and cultural distinctiveness (Boylan, 1986:32).

It can be appreciated how closely related these overlapping visions of Irishness were. Not simply was de Valera's 'dominant ideology' determined by the need to realise 'linguistic and cultural distinctiveness' but the general nationalising discourse, was driven by this shared sense of Irish identity found within a 'rural, Catholic, Gaelic society'. Irishness, certainly for de Valera, Collins and Pearse, can be understood as a natural identity, existing 'in the first order of time' (Smith, 2001:51).

Anthony Smith (2001) offers the Primordial Paradigm as one way in which people can construct and negotiate national identity. This Primordial Paradigm emphasises the understanding of national belonging that is historically deep-rooted and continuous, whereby the nation has always existed (Smith, 2001). National belonging is then a characteristically *natural* phenomenon holding a determining place in social development. Though national identity is constructed as a natural property it can also be constructed as very much a spiritual property. Pearse, writing of '[t]he men who have lead Ireland for twenty-five years', categorise these people as failures for not understanding the spirituality in national identity:

They [the failed leaders] have conceived of nationality as a material thing, whereas it is a spiritual thing. They have made the same mistake that a man would make if he were to forget that he has an immortal soul. They have not recognised in their people the images and likeness of God. Hence, the nation to them is not all holy, a thing inviolate and inviolable, a thing a man dare not sell or dishonour on pain of eternal perdition. They have thought of nationality as a thing to be negotiated about as men negotiate about a tariff or about a trade route, rather than as an immediate jewel to be preserved at all peril, a thing so sacred that it may not be brought into the market places at all or spoken of where men traffic (1976:28-29).

Though Benedict Anderson writes that 'No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind' (1991:7), Pearse goes somewhat beyond humankind and elevates the Irish into 'coterminous with' the 'likeness of God'. The dichotomy Pearse established between understanding nationality through material and spiritual themes turns Irish nationality into a metaphysical principle which cannot be understood in any other way than being experienced and spiritually lived-through.

In asking ‘What does cultural nationalism want?’ David Lloyd answers:

to retrieve for the people an authentic tradition that, in its primordially and continuity, differentiates the nation culturally if not racially from those that surround or occupy it. This act of retrieval seeks to reroot the cultural forms that have survived colonization in the deep history of a people and to oppose them to the hybrid and grafted forms that have emerged in the forced mixing of cultures that colonization entails. It is an archaeological and genealogical project aimed at purification and refinement, at originality and authenticity. The fact that, as we know only too well, most tradition is invented tradition is less significant than the act of resistant self-differentiation that this project involves (1999:89)

In constructing the Traditional Paradigm of Irishness, the *rerooting* of identity can be seen in the prioritisation accorded four overlapping markings of Irish identification; the Irish language, Rural Ireland, Gaelic sports and Catholicism. The following sections shall examine how each constituent was constructed to be connected with Irish identity.

## 1.2 The Traditional Paradigms Cultural Terrain

### 1.2.1 *Irish Rurality*

It has already be seen how Collins depiction of Achill Island is suggestive of the importance rurality can hold in his own national imagination. It was not in urban Ireland that Irishness could be found in some purified mode but rather in the isolated areas of Ireland where ‘one gets a glimpse... of a prosperous and happy gaelic life’ (Collins, 1968:99). The invented and idealised conception of rurality has had an enduring effect upon Irish identity. For Duffy ‘The West’ represented to cultural nationalist ‘the soul of Ireland’ (1997:67). Real Ireland, and so real Irish identity, was firmly located in Rural Ireland which was projected as containing the insularised ingredients that developed ‘The ideal Gael’. When the urban could be depicted as saturated with modern - *English* - ways, the rural retained the essence of Irishness by its elevation as Irish speaking - in certain pockets at least - and unpolluted by materialist, modernist pressures; ‘the soul of Ireland’, as such, is thoroughly rural.

The idealisation of rurality, within the Traditional Paradigm, is hardly surprising given that Dublin was the centre of British control in Ireland. Garvin (1987) tells how the Fenians -



through the paper the United Irishman - intended to move the capital of the country West to Tara on independence, as Dublin seemed too polluted by Anglicised influences. It was not simply that urban Ireland, in the shape of Dublin, could be identified with foreign rule but that the notion of urban Ireland was constructed as fundamentally foreign to Irish identity. Garvin writes of an enormous cleavage in Irish identification when a person from the country could identify 'a Dubliner of the period', roughly late Nineteenth-century to early Twentieth century, as seeming to be 'at least as English as he was Irish' (1987:103). When national identity depends upon a shared sensing of commonality, such a marked division between Irish identities is a telling indication of how urban Ireland was an Other to the purified notion of authentic Irishness found in rurality.

This fissure in collective identity, that separates urban from rural Irish, is somewhat understandable given how 'by 1900 the island was dominated by a rural and village society that was piously Catholic' (Garvin, 1987:58). Ireland like many other countries at the turn of the Twentieth-century was predominately rural. However the adulation towards rurality reached beyond the demographics and placed rurality as the definitive expression of Irishness with Dublin acting as a 'symbol', for cultural nationalists, of how readily people in Ireland could become corrupted by non-Irish influences (Garvin, 1987:104). Rural Ireland was constructed as constituted by thick social bonds - which imply family, community, and cooperation - that have been strong themes within the construction of Irishness. Irrespective of the reality of rural life - how Gibbons (1988) correctly points out that if rural Ireland was the picture of paradise often presented by cultural nationalism, how can one account for the fact that so many people actually left to settle in both urban Ireland and urban centres outside Ireland - the construction of a rural Ireland was a powerful vision of Irish identity that developed towards the latter half of the Nineteenth century which left little room for how urban Ireland may equally share in Irish identity.

Though urbanites may have been pictured as corrupted by an Anglo-Irish mentality it is usually the same group who are often credited with the creation of purified rural Irishness. Writing of the imagery of the West of Ireland, as signifying 'where Ireland can be encountered in its purest, most primeval state', Eagleton is in no doubt as to where the myth of purified rural Irishness originated: 'Like most dreams of primitive rural paradises, it was the fantasy of townsfolk' (1999:173). Gibbons is equally critical of the rural idyllic seeing it as a construction

of 'the metropolitan centre' as an attempt to stabilise and establish identity around particular fixed points (Gibbons, 1988:209). Urbanities established 'the myth of the rural' (Duffy, 1997:69) to idealise, securely position and clarify the distinctiveness of Irishness.

Rural Ireland acted as both Other to 'English industrial urbanism' (Duffy, 1997:69) but also to how leading figures in cultural nationalism saw their own sense of Irishness within urban Ireland. It is hardly co-incidental, a point raised by Kiberd (1995) that the leadership positions of the broad cultural nationalist movement were filled from the ranks of rural descendants. The degree to which urban sensibilities created and imbued rural Ireland as Real Ireland can be appreciated from the different reactions, from a rural and urban audience, to the showing of *The Playboy of the Western World*. When a Dublin audience in 1907 could riot on the premise that Synge had misrepresented rural Ireland - an account that ran against 'the timeless Irish peasant noted for his stoicism and Christian piety' - when the play was preformed 'in the west, audiences found it unremarkable' (Kiberd, 1995:481).

Though Rural Ireland was idealistic fiction, its power to inform Irish identity could continue to affect the shaping and bounding of Irishness well into the Twentieth century. Somewhat remarkably, given it was over twenty years since formal independence but demonstrating the ability of Rural Ireland to mobilise identity, 'the myth of the rural' continued to be articulated by de Valera in his various St Patrick's Day addresses. Noteworthy is the 1943 address that was made against the backdrop of further rural de-population, a concentration in farm ownership and shrinking Gaeltachts. De Valera's vision of Ireland continued to emphasise 'a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sound of industry' (De Valera quoted in Garvin, 2004:45a). Quite a disparity seemed to exist at the rhetorical level of Irish identity when compared to conditions, as they were, on the ground:

The economic fragility of this [de Valera's] 'vision' became all too obvious shortly after he made this broadcast when the 'athletic youths' and 'comely maidens' emigrated in their hundreds of thousands. Almost half a million left during the course of the 1950s (Boylan, 1986:33).

Boylan (1986) is equally critical of the notion of community in Ireland - though he makes no distinction between rural and urban the notion of *community* was typically the preserve of

rurality - essentially during the tenure of de Valera's premiership. Boylan description of community hardly lends itself to the description 'of a prosperous and happy gaelic life':

in political and social terms it was a deeply conservative, essentially backwards-looking, singularly resistant to change, and highly supportive of the existing power and authority structure. Community was experienced as hierarchical in structure, possessing an oppressive sense of social place, a poor sense of mutual obligation between groups in the hierarchy (1986:34).

Not simply was community hierarchically experienced but from this section it can be understood that Irishness itself was hierarchically structured. The true mode of Irishness was to be found in rural Ireland and a lesser mode of Irishness, even non-Irishness, was how urban Ireland was essentially pictured under the Traditional Paradigm. One of the characteristics built into the rural was its adherence to another essentially connected constituent within the Traditional Paradigm; the Irish language.

### ***1.2.2 The Irish Language***

As a means for developing a shared sense of national identity, a common language has often proved an effective organisational mechanism allowing - as some languages can be ideologically employed - a very distinctive picturing of the Nation. For instance Balthazar's analysis of *The Faces of Quebec Nationalism* points at 'the preservation of a francophone nation in North America' as a connecting theme between what he terms the 'new nationalism' and 'the traditional French-Canadian ideology' (1993: 97). Though the articulation of Quebec national sentiments may differ in expression it is somewhat connected by using a common language as the foundation upon which national difference is emphasised. Just as 'a francophone nation in North America' can be employed to highlight the practical distinctiveness of Quebec national identity so too could the usage of the Irish language be employed to emphasise the uniqueness of a Gaelic speaking society within Britain.

George Russell wrote that 'Nations rarely, if ever, start with a complete ideal' (1982:3). Indeed for Russell 'National ideals are the possession of a few people only'. For the elite of Irish cultural nationalists - Russell's 'few people only' - the Irish language was an intrinsic part of their 'National ideals', to be realised in both pre and post-independent Ireland. The Irish language could stand as a continuous sign of Irish identity the way no other symbol of Irish

identity possibly could. The Irish language could be positioned as containing the entire historical and cultural armoury that marks and restores the distinctiveness of Irishness, particularly when set against the cultural and political dominance of what Englishness/Britishness and English-speaking could represent. The language promised not only to restore an Ireland that was culturally independent and unique, but promised a national consciousness that would be unmarked by English language customs, attitudes and lifestyles.

The establishment of the Gaelic League in 1893 greatly facilitated the incorporation of the Irish language into a symbolisation and mobilisation of Irish identity and distinctiveness. For Pearse 'the Irish Revolution' itself began with the establishment of the Gaelic League (1979:10). Certainly Garvin highlights the 'huge "spiritual" and psychological' (2004b:11) effects that the organisation and its meaning had upon the Revolutionary generation. Pearse's admiration for the Gaelic League is understandable given that when the Gaelic League was established its founding members had a very clear understanding of the language in terms beyond the purely communicative function. Speaking the Irish language was attached to a sense of Gaelic identity that usually had an overlapping linkage to playing Gaelic sport or enjoying Gaelic arts. The Irish language was employed and presented as a cultural symbol that pointed towards a developing collective identification of Gaelicism:

The moment Ireland broke with her Gaelic past, she fell away hopelessly from all intellectual and artistic effort. She lost her musical instruments, she lost her music, she lost her games, she lost her language and popular literature and with her language she lost her intellectuality (Hyde quoted in Johnson, 1997:179).

To recover 'her intellectuality' to achieve national self-realisation, Ireland, according to the first President of Ireland and founding member of the Gaelic League, must re-establish the Irish language as the first spoken language or else remain 'hopelessly' divorced from 'intellectual and artistic effort'. Fennell pinpoints the social and cultural connection of Hyde's view towards the ability of the Irish language as pro-actively developing 'the restoration of the distinctive Irish mind in the form of an indigenous Irish world-image and discourse about life' (1983:122). The Irish language would then be a panacea for the return to a Gaelic consciousness.

It is a testimony to the importance of the Irish language as a marker of identity that by 1913 the League had 100,000 members nationwide (Johnson, 1997). The restoration of Irish as the first language could mark, and importantly continuously distinguish Irish identity, not as an

ethnicity within multi-ethnic Britain, but as a separate *Nation* oppressed by the British. The importance of the Irish language, and its primary organisational vehicle for a national identity, is highlighted by Garvin as having lasting effects upon the construction of Irishness:

The politicalization of culture affected by the League in the early years of the century was to create an official cultural ideology... this official ideology was to dominate much of Irish cultural life for a generation after independence (Garvin quoted in Johnson, 1997:179).

A clear indication of the national symbolism attributable to the language - a language that at the time of the 1916 Rising was still very much a minority language - is evident with how Pearse placed such a huge investment in the Irish language's ability to express the core essence of Irishness:

The spiritual thing which is the essential thing in nationality would seem to reside chiefly in language (if by language we understand literature and folklore as well as sounds and idioms), and to be preserved chiefly by language; but it reveals itself in all the arts, all the institutions, all the inner life, all the actions and goings forth of the nation (1976:63).

It can be seen how Pearse firmly endorses Hyde's view towards the Irish language. The Gaelic language marks out the essences of what it is to be Irish and connects Irish identity with other streams of being Irish so connecting Irish identity together within an overlapping consciousness. For Collins the language was *the* determining marker and measurement of Irish freedom itself:

until we have it again [the Irish language] on our tongues and in our minds we are not free (Collins, 1968:102).

It was seen above how Collins saw Irish freedom as contained within the realisation of the Gael and quite obviously this Gael was Irish-speaking. De Valera, of course, Constitutionally placed the language as the first official language of Ireland and so equally emphasised the central importance that the language has to Irish identity. However though it can certainly be seen that the Irish language was a means of constructing a particularised Irish distinctiveness the language itself fails to be popularly spoken.

At independence the educational agenda espoused by the Gaelic League was selectively implemented (Johnson, 1997). The Irish state set about attempting to Gaelicise identity, built upon the premise that the Irish language did indeed contain a characterisation of Irishness. The

Irish language was introduced as a compulsory school subject and a required subject for the awarding of Leaving Certificates until 1973 when the requirement was rescinded (McCoy and Scott, 2000). Not only was the language a mandatory school subject but the Irish state also promoted a symbolic association with the Irish language and Irishness whereby ‘the language appeared on postage stamps and coins, bilingual stationary, and dual language public signs’ (McCoy and Scott, 2000:9). Though a huge symbolic and educational investment was made into the developments and encouragement of the language, the language itself has securely remained a minority language in post-independent Ireland. Though the aspiration to speak Irish, understandable given the level of symbolic investment placed in the language, most probably popularly existed throughout the Twentieth century, the will of the population to learn and use Irish as a first language has been lacking (McCoy and Scott, 2000). This ironic lack of an Irish speaking society imbued with cultural nationalism motifs is not lost on O’Brien when he writes that:

Irish Irelanders consistently denounced other Irish people for being Anglicised: West British. Yet they themselves (in great majority) remained Anglicised in the most basic particular: that of tongue. That is to say, by their own criteria, taken seriously, they were themselves West British: “Far West British” perhaps (1994:87).

However though the Irish language is not popularly spoken it is quite obviously an important symbolic marking of Irishness and is importantly embedded within the discourse of Irishness, remaining an influence in contemporary Ireland where the subject continues to be compulsory in schools. A connected cultural institution that encourages the speaking of Irish but that has, unlike the language, gained mass popularity, is the GAA:

From the start of this century the GAA has contributed to all forms of Irish culture, especially the language. Within the association itself, at meetings, through its rules and in many other ways, the language is encouraged at every level... the GAA Coiste na Gaeilge has as its sole function the promotion of the language (de Burca, 1999:185).

The GAA is a culturally successful instance of a Gaelic cultural network embracing sport, language and politics. The following section will consider the impact the Association and Gaelic sports have had upon constructing Irish identity.

### ***1.2.3 Gaelic Sport***

The attempt to Gaelicise post-independent Ireland is usually viewed as a failure. However one current from the Nineteenth century's Cultural Revival considered to have succeeded is Gaelic sports (Waters, 2004). Sports – supporting or playing – influence identity and there is no question that Gaelic sports both created and reinforced a distinctive sense of Irish identity. Gaelic sports are judged by Mike Cronin to have promoted a particularised sense of Irishness that 'is steeped in history, is exclusive and offers the rejection of a foreign culture and the embrace of the native' (1999:187). Gaelic sports could be employed to emphasise the continuity of Irish distinctiveness that, like language, demonstrated the differences in being Irish from that of other national identities.

In 1884 the Gaelic Athletic Association was established by Michael Cusack and the organisation immediately had an impact within Ireland as 'it spread rapidly through the country' (Lyons, 1973:226). Cusack can certainly be read as having a political motive when he helped establish the GAA:

Cusack believed that the destruction of the Irish games, and their replacement with imported sports, was undermining the strength of the Irish nation. Cusack was a nationalist and the GAA, as with so many of the other organisations involved in the cultural reawakening of Ireland, was driven by an agenda that sought to halt the effects of British colonialism. He wanted to preserve native culture, arrest the incursion of English habits and customs, and ultimately drive the British out of Ireland (Cronin, 1999, <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4i1/cron.htm>).

Gaelic sports could be employed to emphasise the uniqueness of Irish identity set against Britishness. When 'the effeminate games of cricket and soccer' were seen as reinforcing the 'norms of British behaviour and manners', Gaelic sports would encourage 'traditional manly attributes, physical fitness and the fighting spirit necessary to free Ireland' (Cronin, 2001:166). Gaelic games were proof of Irish distinctiveness and further promoted a Gaelicisation of Irish identity.

Collins saw in Gaelic sports an indicator to 'Irish boys that they were Gaels' and furthermore 'provided and restored national games as an alternative to the slavish adoption of

English sport' (1968:122). Gaelic sports would operationalise the cultural distinctiveness of Irishness. Garvin (1987) writes of how Gaelic games helped format a Gaelicist ideology that essentially polarised Irish identity around either being *one of us* - Gaelicist - or being essentially *one of them* - non-Gaelicist and essentially British. This polarisation can be clearly seen in Collins views towards Gaelic games. Though other sports may have been popularly played in Ireland in the late Nineteenth or early Twentieth century, like cricket, a marked differentiation exists between the naturalised presentation of the free, natural, and realised Gael, set against the 'slavish' pursuit of alien imported sports.

Gaelic sports have helped promote an historical identification and continuity that situated the individual within 'Irish civilisation' (Lyons, 1973:227). Not only are Gaelic games played 'virtually exclusively by the Irish themselves' but hurling, or some type of stick and ball game, can offer a definite Gaelic historical lineage with records of hurling matches dating back thousands of years (Sugden and Bairner, 1993:23). Though hurling may show some level of Gaelic association the instance of Gaelic football is far more problematic. According to Humphries, 'Football or its rough-and-tumble predecessor, caid, is first referred to in the Statutes of Galway written in 1572' (1996:5). Sugden and Bairner (1993) point out that while there is very definite ancient historical recordings of hurling its corollary football, caid, 'appears to have been similar to the village football played in Britain and throughout continental Europe in the Middle Ages' (1993:24). This indicates that football, distinct from hurling, was not an established element of Gaelic society. However though football may not share the same privileged position as hurling may have had in Gaelic sporting activities its articulation of Gaelicness points towards how it can be articulated as an expression of Gaelic identity. This endorsement of Gaelic football, as the recreation of 'The ideal Gael', points to the ideological distortion created by the GAA – and indeed other activities and organisations association with the Gaelic Revival – which promoted 'not cultural revival, but rather reinvention' according to Connolly (1997:59). It is not quite simply any problematic linkage to Gaelic society that is an issue but that Gaelic games, as we contemporarily understand them, are essentially a Nineteenth-century invention; the product of Victorian inspired rule fixations (Cronin, 1999).

The GAA founders, perhaps thankfully, took the concepts of football and hurling and adopted them to late Nineteenth-century conditions and political needs. Though Connolly (1997) feels the needs represented 'an emerging consumer society' (1997:59), the most commonly read



need is that which views Gaelic sport as employed to encourage the development of a national consciousness:

The mid-point of the nineteenth century saw a revival in Irish political aspirations with the emergence of the Fenian Movement and the formation of the Irish Republican Movement (I.R.B.) and the Land League. The problem facing organisations such as these was the apparent lack of a collective sense of Irish identity around which to reconstruct the political movement for national independence. In order to boost flagging nationalist ambitions, political activists felt it necessary to help to create the cultural preconditions for independence by reviving and popularising an identity which was distinctively Gaelic and separate from that of the British (Sugden and Bairner, 1993:26).

Though it may seem ironic that ‘a characteristically English approach’ (Sugden and Bairner, 1993:29) was adopted by the GAA in formalising Gaelic games, how ideologically the games developed was to present Gaelic sports as representative of Irish identity and characterising being Irish. Collins, for instance, viewed Gaelic sports as teaching ‘us resource, courage and co-operation. These games provide for our civil life those qualities of ingenuity and daring which military training teaches for the purpose of war’ (1968:104). Even if the codification of Gaelic games owes something to the British approach to sports and even if the games are not a replica of how games may have been played hundreds or even thousands of years ago - so breaking *authentic* Gaelic historical lineage - this does nothing to undermine the symbolic power that Gaelic sports generate as a nationalising force. As Tom Humphries (1996) writes:

There is always this feeling about the GAA, this knowledge that it has its arms wrapped around the entire country and the culture (1996:4).

This notion of the GAA as the embodiment of Irishness is quite obviously what the GAA founding members intended the organisation to represent. This can be seen in Collins understanding of ‘resource, courage and co-operation’ that Gaelic games are fixed to a particular understanding of being Irish and the social skills required of Irish people. Organisationally the GAA attempted to reach all parts of Ireland and it’s grounding in a particular expression of Irish cultural nationalism allowed it to articulate and integrate Irishness around the idea of a Gaelicised Irish Nation. The reason why the GAA ‘has never quite managed to become merely a sporting organization’ (Humphries, 1996:5), is that it operates - like so many other sporting

organisations and identities – and was designed to operate, in matters beyond the sporting fields. The GAA is not simply a sporting expression of being Irish but for some is a characterisation of being Irish itself:

Ties between Irish nationalism and the playing of Gaelic games have never been severed. Nor will they be. As the sharp political edge of Irish nationalism recedes and is replaced by a softer but equally intense interest in the culture and language, the games of hurling and football are increasingly cherished as part of the national character. They come as part-and-parcel of a softer less threatening nationalism... Hurling and football are elements in which we preserve the root of ourselves (ibid).

The importance of how Gaelic sports became Humphries 'root of ourselves' is captured in Mandle's assessment of the GAA's impact upon Irish nationalism up to 1924 which clearly highlights the importance the games had upon nurturing a national consciousness:

It is arguable that no organisation has done more for Irish nationalism than the GAA – not the IRB, so influential in its founding but now dissolved, not the Gaelic League, its linguistic counterpart which has failed in its mission to restore the national language, not the Irish Parliamentary party, which had been unable to adjust to the nationalist revival, not even Sinn Fein, which had broken apart under the impact of the treaty (Mandle quoted in Sugden and Bairner, 1993:44).

Indeed Lyons (1973) regards the GAA as the main contributing force to the revitalization of Nineteenth-century nationalism in rural Ireland. Urban centres had other nationalising sources, artistic sources for instance as well as the GAA, but fragmented rural Ireland required an accessible means for expressing identity. The ability to express a distinct identity was mobilised through Gaelic sports.

When we can rightly question if Gaelic sports are the definitive articulation of Gaelic sporting identity we cannot dismiss the influence Gaelic sports have had upon developing a shared sense of Irishness from the late Nineteenth-Century onwards. Gaelic sports have been, and remain, an intrinsic means for Irish identification. Organisationally the GAA is a presence in every parish in Ireland and the GAA itself remains the most popular sporting organisation in Ireland, with memberships measured in the hundreds of thousands. This offers the GAA the ability to endorse the Gaelic nation through local networks, helping promote Gaelic games and

the values that underpin them. The GAA's linkages into other expressions of Irishness - national self-determination, the promotion of the Irish language or the adherence to Catholicism which was certainly more than visible into the 1970s - allowed for the reinforcement of a composite Irish identity grounded in a Gaelicised conceptualisation. Another institution that has been strongly associated with a sense of Irishness, and identity formation, is the Roman Catholic Church. The influence of the church and its association with a sensing of Irishness is the subject of the next section.

### ***1.2.4 The Roman Catholic Church***

A key factor impacting upon Irish identities since formal independence, and indeed before, has been the influential position the Roman Catholic Church held, particularly pre-1960s, in Irish society. Connolly suggests that by the late 1880s it had become fundamentally established that 'religious and political loyalties could be taken as largely inter-changeable' (1997:57). Ó Tuathaigh (1986) marks religion in Ireland, and not simply in the north of Ireland, as a central sign of ethnicity. To be a Catholic essentially meant to be Irish/nationalist/Gaelic/Separatist while to be a non-Catholic may have implied British/Protestant/foreign/alien. Though lines of identity can be seen in the late Nineteenth-century, an association with Irishness expressed through Catholicism can certainly be seen, for some, to be far more historically grounded. Looking at why the Reformation failed to take hold in Ireland Kevin Williams highlights how challenges to Protestantism was based around a Gaelic resistance 'to the attempts made by the English crown to promote the Protestant faith' in Ireland (2005:37). Furthermore, for Williams:

This resistance led to an identification of Catholicism with freedom from foreign interference and this in turn prompted the development of a vision of national consciousness that saw a fusing of religious, political and cultural elements (ibid).

Irish identity in the seventeenth-century saw that 'Protestantism went necessarily with the dominance of England' (Hasting, 1997:89). Certainly Collins could appreciate how 'One creed [Protestantism], the creed of the minority, was selected to be used for the purpose of division and domination' in Ireland (1968:77). The 'Plantations by Britain's agents' (ibid) gives an indication of how Protestantism could be placed as an alien importation that deviated from the marking of true Irishness. Ó Tuathaigh (1986) highlights how the dispossession of Catholics, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth century, and the oppression of Catholic religion encouraged a

somewhat stable sensing of commonality between Catholics against the colonialising power. Protestantism could be associated with Britishness and Britishness could be, and certainly was in the early Twentieth century, associated with domination. With Collins, for instance, it can be seen that it is not the responsibility of Catholicism for any division or confusion in being Irish, no suggested 'division and domination' exhibited by Catholicism, rather it is Protestantism - 'Britain's agents' - that encourages conflict in Ireland. Collins uses a non-referenced source to emphasis where he felt, and by whom, power was historically abused in Ireland:

'A Protestant garrison was in possession of the land, magistracy, and power of the country, holding that property under the tenure of British power and supremacy, and ready at every instance to crush the rising of the conquered' (quoted in Collins, 1968:77)

It is no exaggeration to claim that a naturalisation process historically occurred - with the fusion between national identity and religious identity - leading people to make the association that to be Irish was also to synonymously be inferred as a Roman Catholic. Perhaps then, as religious identity marked such strong identification with Irishness - with such a socially endorsed inter-changeable exchange between religious and political identity - it is no great surprise that when formal independence arrived no significant effort was made to establish a separation between Church and national identity. In fact essentially the opposite was to happen; the mobilisation of Irishness through religious identity was to be enforced in the practice of the state:

In the light of the salience of religion in Irish culture, this [Gaelic nationalisation of Irish identity] also involved the continuation and strengthening, through education, of the connection between religion and national identity (Williams, 2005:38).

For Garvin the realisation of 'Catholic arcadia' (2004a:46) would prove a motivation for many members of the Irish political elite after independence. Irish Gaelic national identity would, or would continue to, mean Irish Catholic national identity. According to Garvin the established links between church and political structures carried through into independent Ireland with the consequences that:

this made the Catholic Church in independent Ireland a powerful and autonomous agency which for many purposes operated like a second government or a state within a state. In the areas of health, education and much of public ideological

discourse, the power of the Church was enormous. Above all, the Church attempted to control, some would say enslave, much of the intellectual and emotional life of the entire country (2004a:3).

However the Irish Free State was not an exception in coupling religion to national identity. As Kearney (1997) highlights the situation in Northern Ireland was to develop a Protestant State for a Protestant people while in England, at the time, membership of the Church of England was taken as an expression of Englishness. However the Irish state was somewhat exceptional when compared to other European countries that could be characterised as Roman Catholic – Italy, Spain or France for instance. No other European state allowed the Catholic Church the same level of material and ideological support as the Irish state. The Catholic Church would hold great influence in not simply educational and health delivery but in how its moral codes could be enforced, through law and socialised norms, to affect all people in the new state, irrespective of religious persuasion. Garvin points out that the social power of the Catholic Church, up until the mid-Twentieth century, can be somewhat appreciated by how challenges and negative comments of the social failures of post-independent Ireland, often came from the ‘sociological “outsider”’ (2004a:32). Indeed there are few instances that present themselves of popular mass-based political resistance to clericalism in post-independent Ireland, essentially up until the 1960s, which speaks of the power the Catholic Church had in pre-1960s Ireland.

The socio-political environment in pre and post-independent Ireland was grounded in an acceptance of the privileged position of the Church within Irish society and the marking of Catholicism within Irish identity. Cronin (1980) positioned the Irish Free State as ‘unofficially, a Catholic state’ (1980:33) and equally for Phadraig (1995) ‘the main ideology of the Irish state was Catholicism’ (1995:599). Boylan actually goes beyond seeing the state as essentially Catholic and feels that ‘if allowed’, the Catholic Church, ‘would have extended its powerful influence to the social and administrative organisation of the country (1986:34). The Catholic Church, as such, would have been the state. The reach of the church was quite extensive and Inglis (1998) positions it as the second most powerful institution behind that of the power of the state in Irish society, and it can be seen above that Garvin likens it to ‘a state within a state’.

Given then that the two very powerful social institutions that affected the formatting of early to mid Twentieth century Irish identity – the state and the Church – each shared a particular religious ethos, it is hardly surprising that the association of Irishness and Catholicism was so

often coupled. The ‘notion that the Irish are almost naturally Catholic’ (Inglis, 1998:2) and ‘the assumption that the Catholic community in Ireland was synonymous with the Irish nation’ (Ó Tuathaigh, 1986:66) was a widely accepted understanding of Irish identity. Certainly for Mary Kenny writing of the time of the independence struggle a Catholic ‘consciousness’ (1997:101) was evident in the Irish Catholic Press in 1919-1920 that saw the Nation as combined with the religious. Something of the results of this coupling of Irish and Catholic can be seen in the exodus of Anglicans from the Free State – between 1911 and 1926 the Church of Ireland population decreased from just 250,000 to under 165,000 (Kenny, 1997:105) – that tells us something of the dominant ethno-religious identity of Irish society and the Irish Free State just a few short years before and after independence.

The privileging of a Catholic identity did not simply remove people from the state but could remove people from Irishness itself. Not only could there be a question of national loyalty because of one’s identity - Catholic representing Irishness and Protestant representing Britishness - there indeed could be a denial of other religious identities present in Ireland. Robert Briscoe, a Dublin Jew and a founding member of Fianna Fail, tells how in the late 1920s when canvassing in Kerry he declined to attend mass and was told by the local party organiser that “‘Everybody goes to Mass here, you’ll have to do likewise... Haven’t we enough bloody trouble explaining Fianna Fail without having to explain you as well’” (quoted in Keogh, 1998:88). Eventually Briscoe acquiesced and stood at the Chapel door and fabricated ‘he was going to Mass’ (ibid). Incidents such as this highlight what Inglis (1998) points out about the historical social positioning of Catholic adherence, ‘Being catholic was as much a public as it was a private affair’ (1998:68). According to Inglis:

Such is the power of the Catholic Church in Ireland that it was, and in many places still is, difficult for a Catholic to be regarded as the same as everyone else and to attain and maintain the basic respect of others without going to Mass on Sundays. Going to Mass established someone as part of the community and, consequently, bestowed a basic minimum of cultural capital on the individual and the family’ (1998:70).

Incidents such as the one that involved Briscoe indicate something of the ethno-religious cultural characteristic of Irishness some 80 years ago. The denial of difference - as with Briscoe’s charade of attending Mass, also highlighted in the migration of Protestants from the south

leading up to and following independence - is suggestive of a cultural climate that would not accommodate national identification without also fixed religious identification. However the above consideration has also shown that it was not only religion that marked Irish identity but also the Irish language, Gaelic sports and the theme of Rural Ireland. The following section is a challenge to understanding Irish identity through these markings.

## **1.3 The Modern Paradigm of Irishness**

Changes have occurred in both self-projections and self-perceptions of what may constitute Irish identity in contemporary Ireland. In general and sweeping terms, it could be suggested that Ireland has over the past 30-40 years been fundamentally transformed from a Traditional to a Modern, or perhaps even a Post-modern, society. Certainly Cronin (1980) sees Ireland as meeting Samuel Huntington's criteria for a modern society; the army is de-politicised, there is popular political participation with political institutions commonly accepted as legitimate and secularisation is certainly a feature of contemporary Irish society. However the social transformation within Ireland is not simply related to what might be understood as rather technical factors of modernity - urbanisation, secularisation or economic and political structures - but addresses the very core of Irish identity, and what this may imply in defining or being Irish.

It has been seen above that the Traditional Paradigm has some ability to enclose Irishness around fixed themes of identity. Perhaps the defining theme of the Modern Paradigm is its essential inability to define Irishness with an equally enforced, compelling and accepted power of understanding. When collective identity under the Traditional Paradigm went essentially unquestioned - popular challenges to the norms of identity were the explicit exceptions, not the rule - in contemporary Ireland questioning identity, be it individual or collective, is generally seen as opened-up and indeed interrogated.

Perhaps the changed perspectives within Irish identity is best highlighted in Longley's encapsulation of how Irish identity has moved away from an Irishness exhibiting 'excessive introversion' towards a contemporary Irishness that displays 'excessive extroversion' (2001:19). This 'excessive introversion' is somewhat represented by Robert Briscoe's pretence of attending mass. Sean O'Faolain once remarked of 1940s Ireland that:

Life is so isolated now that it is no longer being pollinated by germinating ideas windborne from anywhere (O’Faolain quoted in Boylan, 1986:34).

Conversely contemporary Ireland could possibly be characterised as a society that *is* ‘being pollinated by germinating ideas windborne from anywhere’. There does appear to be a general acceptance of an opening up of Irish society in the 1960s and a re-articulation of Irish national identity away from one hegemonic mode of visioning towards transformed and more ambiguous modes of understanding Irish identity.

The 1960s saw the beginning of the Irish state’s jettisoning of valued elements of the Traditional Paradigm – Gaelicisation for instance was questioned and within the educational system there were some reforms to meet the needs of economic modernisation. Social changes can also be seen in this period with Cogan (1975) highlighting some de-coupling of the association of Catholic with Irish. Perhaps nothing better illustrates a re-articulation of (southern) Irish identity than the retreat from the political nationalism of a united Ireland. For instance to be Irish in contemporary Ireland does not necessarily imply, as once suggested by Collins, that being Irish somewhat demands ‘our desire for national unity above all things’ (1968:82).

Tom Garvin has written about the ‘redefinition’ of Irishness stating in the 1950s and intending to reflect and project ‘a popular and democratic’ vision of Irish nationalism, which for Garvin is ‘still going on’ (2004a:7). This ongoing development of identity ‘redefinition’ is well captured by Ivana Bacik:

There are many Irelands, just as there are many different facets of Irish identity, and to attempt to describe a collective form of ‘Irishness’ represents an exercise in gross generalisation (2004:18).

When, under the Traditional Paradigm, there was little contestation about Irish identity within the Modern Paradigm there is indeed some space for understandings a plurality of ‘Irelands’. Garvin writes of how it was not uncommon for political scientists to characterise pre-1970s Ireland as ‘a closed society... a society which shut out unwelcome ideas coming in from outside and did so with considerable success’ (2004a:270). In contemporary Ireland it may even be possible to detect the contour of post-nationalism when Cronin identifies how the role of nationalist ideology in Irish society has been radically diminished because, quite simply, ‘it has fulfilled its function and is needed no more’ (1980:221). Political sovereignty has been achieved and culturally the Gaelicisation of Irish society is now firmly abandoned and, according to



Cronin, 'little [cultural] differences [exist] between England and Ireland today' (ibid). The following section will briefly highlight the movement in Irishness away from the Traditional Paradigm.

## 1.4 Unbinding Ireland

Though cultural changes generally show a cultural lag behind economic changes the publication of the Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958 is usually accepted as a critical moment when recognition was given to the substantive failure of past economic policies and the need to thoroughly address them. The policies followed within the Programme for Economic Expansion would have a profound impact on Irish society and identity. Indeed emphasising this impact, Breen *et al.*, notes its year of publication could be marked as essentially the symbolic birth of the Modern Ireland:

1958 marks a turning point in the nature and rule of the Irish State. More significantly, it also marks the point at which the various strands of societal change within Irish society fused. From then onwards, state and class structure evolved in tandem. Though historians may dispute the depth of the watershed, sociologically 1958 dated the beginning of the contemporary period in Ireland (1990:5).

The Programme helped dislodge the entrenched nationalist attitudes towards sentimentalised rurality and the belief in economic self-sufficiency. A dominant over-riding theme within Irish nationalism - economic independence - would be slowly eroded as the state and international capital would now be a pro-active element in economic development.

Breen *et al.* (1990) identifies the socio-political environment of the late 1950s as a time where, 'The vocabulary and politics of economics has already begun to supplant that of nationalism' (1990:4). This 'vocabulary' was to have some appeal, indeed it is seen by Mac Laughlin (1997) as having been legitimated and placed as the ruling ideology by the 1970s. That this 'vocabulary' may have been ideologically legitimised so quickly speaks of aspirations to escape the economic limits of the past. What also speaks of aspirations and the questioning of Ireland's failures, particularly in the 1950s, is the expression of discontent witnessed by mass emigration:

Of all the children born in the 1930s, the very people who should have been changing and building up the Republic in the 1950s, when they were at their prime, 80 per cent would emigrate (Cronin, 2001:223).

The limits of economic nationalism, and its popular rejection by people at large, can be seen when Ireland voted on membership of the European Community in 1972. Some 83 per cent of those who voted supported membership, suggesting that 'Membership was thus the "settled will" of the Irish people' (Laffan, 2004:55). The 'vocabulary' that emphasised economics can be seen in Lemass's address from 1962 on discussion talks for Ireland's entry into the European Common Market which clearly shows a vision of Ireland as not independent but rather inter-dependent with other countries:

Our destiny is bound up with that of Europe and our outlook and our way of life have, for fifteen centuries, been moulded by Christian ideals and the intellectual and cultural values on which European civilization rests. Our people have always tended to look to Europe for inspiration, guidance and encouragement (Lemass, quoted in Ahern, 2002:97).

Though of course joining the European Union is a different political matter today than it was in the 1960s, Lemass's comments do point at how the Irish state was prepared to integrate its 'destiny' with that of Europe.

This re-articulation of Irishness away from national insularity and exceptionality, why a different 'vocabulary' around identity was required, can be somewhat answered by Gellner who rightly points out that:

A growth-bound economy dependent on cognitive innovation cannot seriously link its cultural machinery (which it needs unconditionally) to some doctrinal faith which rapidly becomes obsolete, and often ridiculous (1983:142).

If Ireland was to economically develop some established constituents around Irish identity had to be addressed. The orientation of Irishness, its 'doctrinal faith' would have to be fundamentally re-examined. Some of this self-examination of 'doctrinal faith' is reflected in the results of the 1972 constitutional referendum that actively de-coupled Irish identity from religious identity, removing both the privileged constitutional position of the Roman Catholic Church and indeed religious identity in general. Obviously this was not simply a questioning of the ideological nationalist position of Irish economic self-sufficiency, protectionism and indeed frugality.

Cronin (2001) highlights how the 1960s witnessed fundamental changes in the socio-economic conditions within Ireland, with both the steady urbanisation of the country but also how, for the first time, by the end of the 1960s the radical restructuring of the economy would show more people working in the industrial sector than the agricultural sector. The 1960s saw more people prepared to question the positioning of previously esteemed institutions and cultural markings – not simply the position of the Roman Catholic Church but even the notion of a Gaelicised Ireland for instance. Writing in this period of social change in *The Importance of Being Irish* Alan Bestic captures a mood of change developing in late 1960s Ireland:

The old, dreary temples of my day are rusting and tilting and falling. History is respected now, but not worshipped. It is no longer a mortal sin to remove one's eyes for a moment from the saga of the 1916 rebellion to look forward and ahead. To suggest that Ireland had no more heroes than any other nation no longer leaves one open to a charge of treason (1969:4).

Bestic perceives adjustment in how people thought about Irishness that permitted a greater level of social and individual reflexivity which seemed to open Irish identity to challenge and contestation:

The most important change of all, however, has come in the Irish attitude to the Irish. We now are inclining to believe that we are almost like other people, warts and all (1969:4).

Three major socio-cultural changes are cited by Bestic as altering Irish identity: 'television, packaged holiday tours and money' (1969:5). For Bestic it was the increased circulation of money - allowing for the purchase of television sets and foreign holidays - that is prioritised and seen as determining cultural change. Writing, but from a radically different perspective than Bestic, Fennell essentially reaches the same conclusions regarding the materialism promoted by economic development:

the (economic) boom years of the 1960s... led to a general ideological reaction against the nationalist programme inherited from the revolution. The Gaelic revival was neglected and tacitly shelved. "Catholic" became an unfashionable word and the Irish identity was declared non-Catholic (1983:15).

Fennell writes of a 'crisis of identity' instigated by the abandonment of 'the satisfactory national self-definition that we lived and worked with during the first half of the [Twentieth]

century' (1993:252). In Fennell's description of Irish identity the unmistakeable imprint of the Traditional Paradigm appears very evident:

It [Irish national identity] is a possession, an experienced and lived-with reality, something created, taken for granted and used. It is a reasonably clear, accurate and lovable image of the nation, which its members or the great majority of them carry with them, subconsciously, in their daily lives. Created by the words and symbolic acts of thinkers, poets, politicians and journalists, interacting with the people in the pursuit of national goals, it is the distinguishing, bonding principle that enables the nation to be, to act cooperatively, and to achieve. (ibid).

Fennell proposes that the Irish 'nation' is now 'unbonded and in bits, not pulling together, paralysed, unable to solve problems' (ibid). However applying the same analysis to 'the satisfactory national self-definition that we lived and worked with during the first half of the [Twentieth] century', how well did Ireland's 'satisfactory national self-definition' deal with the British identity in Ireland, cultural plurality, economic development or even rural or urban planning? To give an instance of 'the satisfactory national self-definition', though admittedly only a few years after the creation of the Free State, Ranelagh points out that in 1926, '43 per cent of Irish-born men and women were living abroad... Of Southern Ireland's 2.9 million population in 1926, over 800,000 were living in "overcrowded conditions" (more than two persons to a room), mainly in the slums of Dublin where the scale of infant mortality was horrendous' (1983:212). Fennell's 'satisfactory national self-definition' seems to do nothing, certainly not in the immediate post-independence period, to address these issues of emigration or indeed the housing conditions in Dublin or Ireland generally. However Fennell does have a point in how national identity may have been differently experienced under the Traditional Paradigm compared to how Irish identity may be negotiated from the 1960s onwards. However it is not necessarily the case that national identity is 'unbonded' but rather that Irishness is unbonded from the Traditional Paradigm. A rather obvious question is that if the Traditional Paradigm has lost its hegemonic ability to define Irishness what has replaced this identity? Ireland may be characterised as modern what are the constituents of this modernity? Though Ireland may meet some technical criteria of modernity what exactly does this say of Irish identity?

## 1.5 Modern Ireland

This opening up and questioning of Irish identity is well captured by Kiberd in the closing lines of his work *Inventing Ireland*:

If the notion of “Ireland” seemed to some to have become problematic, that was only because the seamless garment once wrapped like a green flag around Cathleen ní Houlihan had given way to a quilt of many patches and colours, all beautiful, all distinct, yet all connected too. No one element should subordinate or assimilate the others: Irish or English, rural or urban, Gaelic or Anglo, each has its part in the pattern (1995:653).

Unquestionably contemporary Irish identity has, and is, constructed beyond any encompassing ‘seamless garment’ to now resemble ‘a quilt of many’, quite different ‘patches’. There is, in contemporary Ireland, some recognition of the complexity of identities that have been a presence, albeit sometimes made invisible, in Ireland. However though there is increased social acceptance that Irishness is *not only* Catholic or Gaelicist there is also some consensus around the notion of what Irishness can mean in contemporary Ireland.

Contemporary Irish identity is generally treated as a thin bond of association as compared to the thick bonds implied by the Traditional Paradigm. The foundational, and essentially monoculturalist thick notions of Irish identity associated with the Traditional Paradigm or more generally Traditional Ireland - religiousness, selflessness, commonality, deference, hierarchy, security, community based or socially solidaristic - is suggested to have been displaced by modernisation. The way Irishness is constructed has altered and according to Waters, in his *An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Modern Ireland*, Ireland is no longer a nation but is rather ‘an econonation’ (1997:173). Desmond Fennell writes of how Irishness, particularly again from the 1960s, was culturally denationalised:

it was not the living Gaelic language and the general, non-religious cultural fabric which our modernisers began to reject. Now, by gradual stages, it was Catholicism, as the religion typifying Irishness, and the whole symbolic system signifying Irishness which the nation, led by the nationalist state, had sponsored and upheld. More particularly, it was all the symbols and institutions which had underpinned that image, ranging from the GAA ban on foreign games and the

Christian Brothers (as a nationalist teaching order) to the nationalist history books, the Gaelic revival policy, the cult of the heroes of 1916, and the celebration of the national freedom struggle (1983:58-59).

Fennell points to the hollowing-out of the substantive thick elements in Irish identity. However the *how* Irishness is experienced, and this will be taken up more so from Chapter 4 onwards, seemingly does remain but simply not with the force of compulsion or meaning that Fennell favours. People continue to identify and actively interact with Irishness, even if the content has become more indefinable and individualised in meaning.

The way being Irish has changed - de-substantiated of its practised Traditional Paradigmatic meaning and displaced by a disconnecting individual attitude - is not only seen in Fennell but can also be observed in other commentators as well. Peadar Kirby in encapsulating the dichotomy of the contents of Twentieth century Irishness appears highly dismissive of the social bonds within contemporary Irishness:

We have already this century had two separate identities imposed upon us, both of which we seem to have accepted with relative resignation. De Valera's Gaelic, Catholic and Nationalist Ireland, made up of frugal homesteads and comely maidens, gave way overnight to the new pluralist, European and technological Ireland, embarrassed at its nationalist past and frantically trying to show our EEC 'partners' that we are as sophisticated as they are (1988:45).

A similar theme of reducing the emotional national bonds of contemporary Ireland is evident in Sean Cronin (1980) who emphasises - particularly since the opening up of the Irish economy for multinational capital in the 1960s - that the Irish state has progressively discarded traditional nationalist commitments and ideology. Cronin suggests that 'the Irish nation-state has found no substitute [ideology], apart from a vague liberalism built on a system of free enterprise and parliamentary party government modelled on Britain' (1980:31). Perhaps contemporary Irishness might now, after the Celtic Tiger, appear an even vaguer, unstable and thin identity than it was for Cronin writing in 1980? Certainly Michael O'Connell, who writes of similar matters to Cronin but in a period of successful economic performance, feels 'a serious social concern is lurking within' our individual and collective identity:

this is the belief, widely felt if less often explicitly stated, that the cost of modernisation and economic success and a hegemonic bland liberal consensus is the loss of identity and character, and a sense of who we are (2001:7).

This 'sense of who we are' was once, of course for many people, grounded within the systematic operation of the coherently articulated Traditional Paradigm. When this organising mode of identity became increasingly challenged by social and economic modernisation, or perhaps the hyper-modernisation of the past ten-fifteen years, it is not unexpected that some individuals can feel distant from the reality of Ireland and how their construction of Irishness was developed. For Miller (1995) the structures of contemporary liberal societies can undermine how national identities can be experienced. In liberal societies collective events may be 'exceptional' that 'call these [national] allegiances out of the back room of our mind into full consciousness' (1995:14). Miller highlights how some events may seem 'trivial' - such as a sporting event - while other events can be more 'momentous', such as resistance to colonialism or armed conflict or natural catastrophes (ibid) but that confronted by these events people can, and do, situate themselves within a shared identity.

Mac Einri, somewhat like O'Connell, also points towards rapid social changes in Ireland as opening Irish identity to 'a new sense of anomie and loss of identity' (2005:44). John Waters feels that Irish identity, post-1960s, is in some ways the adaptation of the colonial viewpoint, 'seeking to forget its history and move on' (1997:22), an attempted retreat from history into 'a new liberal and enlightened age' (ibid). For a society often depicted both nationally and internationally as rooted firmly to historical relations and symbolism, such a demystified attitude to history, as Waters suggests, opens the social field to a radical change in how Irish identity may be understood. Waters positions Modern Ireland as ideologically dependent upon a particularly explicit understanding of economic advancement. Seemingly Modern Ireland equates 'improvement of the Irish way of life with economic growth only' (1997:22). This position is very much in line with Michel Peillon's summation of 'the project of the Irish bourgeoisie' as the 'commitment to economic development and the creation of more and more material wealth' (1982:53). Notwithstanding how debateable the association of wealth is to societal or individual happiness, it should be accepted that consumerism and wealth creation seem foremost concerns within Modern Ireland that affect identity, that is, most people have willingly embraced consumerism. O'Connell identifies the paramount social goals of the 1990s as 'consumerism,

and acquisitive materialism’ (2001:147) or the naturalising of possessive individualism with ‘more and more material wealth’:

When the opportunity came around [in the 1990s], the first thing we wanted to do with additional income was to play catch-up with Europe in terms of private, individual, consumption – health, education, and indeed virtually any sector supported by the public purse and ultimately taxation, would have to wait (O’Connell, 2001:147).

The reactions to consumerism - this idea from O’Connell that places the individual over the collective - often filters through and affects debates around contemporary Irishness.

Emily O’Reilly also offers a very depressing assessment of the exhibitionism of Modern Ireland and what this may possibly say of contemporary Irish identity:

Many of us if we have any developed sensibility recoil at the vulgar fest that is much of modern Ireland the rampant, unrestrained drunkenness, the brutal, random violence that infects the smallest of our townlands and villages, the incontinent use of foul language with no thought to place or company, the obscene parading of obscene wealth, the debasement of our civic life, the growing disdain of the wealthy towards the poor, the fracturing of our community life, the God like status given to celebrities all too often replaced somewhere down the line with a venomous desire to attack and destroy those who were on pedestals the week before, the creation of “reality” TV, more destructive in its cynical filleting of the worth and wonder of the human soul than anything George Orwell could have imagined (O’Reilly, 2005:79-80).

The Irish have become individualised in an environment of both collapsing social bonds and reinforced consumerist identity:

Released from the handcuffs of mass religious obedience, we are Dionysian in our revelry, in our testing of what we call freedom. Hence the staggering drink consumption, the child like showing off of helicopters and four wheel drives and private cinemas, the fetishising of handbags and high heels, the inability of some to contribute to charity without a photographer on hand to record it, the supplanting of bog standard childhood ailments like measles and whooping cough with fat induced obesity and diabetes (O’Reilly, 2005:81).



David McWilliams, identifying a 'New Ireland', writes 'that the New Ireland is a pop-nation. We have embraced a new disposable culture, where fame is fleeting, significance transitory and attention spans limited' (2005:57). McWilliams identifies a changed relationship pertaining to an Old and New Irish Dream:

The Old Irish Dream... was of Catholicism, nationalism, community, chastity, the Brits, the six-counties, the Irish language, the famine, the underdog, getting a good job in the bank and the glamour of Grace Kelly. Things were offered up, sacrificed in this life for fulfilment in the next. This has been replaced by the New Irish Dream (McWilliams, 2005:53).

This contrasts to the New Irish Dream that McWilliams, like O'Reilly, views as strongly themed around the channel of consumerism:

The New Irish Dream can be best summed up by 'I wanna trade up'. I want the biggest fridge, the best holiday, the newest car, the loudest sound system, the healthiest food, the best yoga posture, the most holistic world-view, the most talked about wedding and the best sex with as many partners, in as many positions as possible. I want it all and I want it now. I want to measure, compare and out-perform. I want to be recognised, appreciated and loved. I wanna be number 1 and no-one is going to stop me (2005:53-54).

When Waters (1995) made the very observant point that Ireland, and the Irish, in the 1980s and before had a consumerist mentality but without an economic ability to satisfy consumerism, the Ireland of the late-1990s and beyond has that economic ability - credit - to embrace consumerism. MacLachan and O'Connell's New Ireland is also shaped by consumerism but it takes some account, as McWilliams does, of the economic depression of pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland:

The "new" Ireland of the late 1990s, a software hothouse, of *Riverdance*, e-commerce and speculators, with its cosmopolitan cities and an increasingly self-confident, agnostic, entrepreneurial and worldly youth, has leapt into a future unimagined, and certainly unanticipated, in the doldrums of a decade ago (2000:2).

It would be easy to read into how some people - like Waters, Fennell or O'Reilly for instance - critically engage with and disparage contemporary Irishness as an attempt to defend their cultural

and socially privileged class position against the contemporary de/re-structuring of Irish society. What Ireland is becoming or has become for some people - essentially from the bottom-up - is a society that does not recognize nor respect the status differentially established and underpinning Irish identity since the very foundation of the state; *hierarchical deference*. The wealth created in Ireland over the past 10 years has had a radical effect upon both Irish and class identity, though not necessarily as McWilliams (2005) sees it as the simple development of an individualist middle class society. There is still obviously class hierarchies operating, and differences in how class is experienced, but increasing aspects of Irish identity are not simply developed through a consumerist identity, according to Mac Laughlin (1997) national identity has itself been commodified.

What is important in this commodification process is how it can shape the contours of national self-understanding:

The characterising and marketing of a country is part of the modern preoccupation with promoting tourism, and is also a place where politics and commerce meet: a country's self-image cannot be wholly divorced, even for commercial gain, from the notion of what it stands for, and what its fundamental values are (Boyce, 2001:254).

The symbolic selection around representing Irishness has moved beyond the Gaelicist notions and is now firmly embedded within a commercial concern. Commercialisation may have lead contemporary Irishness to appear 'unbonded' or 'vague', an unstable and perhaps a substantively thin identity with the only unifying social component bounding it being consumerism. However Ireland's bounded-ness can be identified in other ways beyond the commercial.

## 1.6 Bounded Ireland

If Ireland is indeed *Modern Ireland* - and if the position taken by Tom Nairn of nationalism as 'a universal condition of modernity' (1997:21) is correct - it is then a fair assumption that Irish people view both themselves and other nationalised groupings through a lens of nationality. Whether celebrated or rejected every *modern* person ostensibly holds a national identity:

A major source of the strength of national identities has been in its inescapability. For much of the modern world, the nation has appropriated to itself the linguistic

and cultural means necessary for the articulation of the sense of self of its members (Poole, 2003:272).

Though being national is 'the condition of our times' (Eley and Suny, 1996:32) this 'sense of self' in contemporary Ireland is certainly not experienced as the 'sense of self' that underlay the operationalisation of Irish identity in the early to mid-Twentieth-century. However a 'sense of self' relating oneself to Irishness remains firmly embedded in the discourse around Irish identity; no one writing about Irishness - O'Connell, Kuhling and Keohane, Cronin, Fennell or Waters - after all, generally claims they are not themselves Irish or there is no sense of Irish identity. Though Irishness has moved beyond a once fixed determination of identity it is still possible to identify some loose commonality in Irish identity.

For people in contemporary Ireland, and for the Rebels of 1916 and for de Valera or Collins, Irish national identity holds some axis of identity:

Irish people like to see Ireland as an exceptional place. Our suffering throughout history is unparalleled. Our monks saved civilisation in the dark ages. Our religiosity is incomparable. Our literary achievements are unique. Our struggle for freedom inspired the people of the world. Our sense of fun is unmatched. The complexity of our dilemmas is unsurpassed. The leap we have made from pre-modernity to post-modernity is faster and therefore stranger than that of any other society. And because Ireland occupies a place in the world grossly disproportionate to its population, this sense of our uniqueness is often reflected back on us from the outside (O'Toole, 2003:1).

Fintan O'Toole (2003) follows this statement by claiming that this self-understanding of exceptionality is 'an illusion' (ibid), pointing out that:

Many countries, even in Europe, have similar experiences of struggling to secure their independence against larger neighbours in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many cultures have been shaped by the same broadly nationalist cultural revivals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (2003:1-2).

Though feelings of national uniqueness may be 'an illusion' it remains a very powerful and influential 'illusion'. People continue to identify with Irish identity and distinctive markings surrounding national identity are evident. People in Ireland may not necessarily see themselves as Gaelicist or Roman Catholic but, certainly Irish people would identify with what O'Toole sees

as certain delusion; the idea of Irish historical suffering, literary achievements, an Irish sense of humour and the notion that Ireland does hold a global place that is ‘grossly disproportionate to its population’. Even in their introduction to the book *Cultivating Pluralism* MacLachlan and O’Connell highlight two of O’Toole’s points of Ireland being ‘a small island on the fringes of Europe, yet achieving great literary and artistic fame’ (2000:2).

What is constructed as Irish national identity may be an ‘illusion’ but it is a popular ‘illusion’ constructing peoples’ self-understandings of what it may be to be Irish. As Ingram (2000:59) points out:

Nations are nothing if not particular. Their emotional appeal as objects of love and identification comes from the belief in their unique individuality and distinct and valuable identity. To be a member of this or that nation is to be different, to have a particular identity, shared with some, but not all others, to be something that is concrete and particular rather than abstract and universal (2000:59).

Though the contemporary ‘illusion’ of Irish identity contrasts quite markedly with what had been the accepted traditional notions of Irishness, people continue to identify themselves as Irish, even if locating their Irishness is increasingly challenging. People continue to accept that Irishness does mean something. Though this meaning may have many influences and levels of identifications it is still possible to detect some bounding around Irish identity.

## **1.7 Privileging Irishness to the Republic of Ireland**

Dura writes that:

The term *nationalism* is often confused with the ideology of the nation-state, which seeks to fix or privilege political identification at the level of the nation-state (1996:157).

The Republic of Ireland state ideology has not only attempted but has generally succeeded in defining the 26 county ‘nation-state’ as essentially representative and co-terminous with the Irish Nation and Irish identity. People in southern Ireland fundamentally consider Irish identity as bounded in the Republic of Ireland. One could quite easily be forgiven for imagining two nations in Ireland, a northern and a southern one, for any political rhetoric about a united Ireland usually ends up tempering emotions or measuring words against Unionist consent and perceived

financial costs of any proposed united Ireland. However the issue of Northern Ireland says a lot more about Irish identity than the idea of popular consent or a concern with economics. It says something of how Irish identity is, generally, bounded within the Republic of Ireland.

Though Boland may feel that neither ‘The people’ nor the 26 county state has a ‘right’ to determine if membership of the Irish nation extends to ‘the people of the Falls Road, the Glens of Antrim, the Bogside and South Armagh’ (1984:58) this ‘right’ has been by-passed with membership of the nation akin to bounded within the nation-state. Goodman (2000) views partition as having its own dynamic that leads to state-formations within both states of the island; with the southern state and northern state having separate priorities and concerns.

For Boyce (2001) the state is an essential agent for national construction that actively selects what constituents to involve in national remembrance and what factors to exclude from The Nation. Unquestionably the state has been instrumental in development the coupling of The Nation as the bounded nation-states within Ireland. Even when considering O’Toole’s ‘illusion’ particularly the idea that ‘Our struggle for freedom inspired the people of the world’, it is clear that people in the Republic of Ireland largely distance themselves from identifying or supporting ‘Our struggle for freedom’ with Northern Ireland. The 1960s witnessed not only people in the Republic of Ireland recognising the complexity of the outstanding National Question, but the state recognising the legitimacy of Northern Ireland. Ó Tuathaigh (1986) recalls how in Ireland people were more supportive than accusing towards Lemass’s visit to Belfast or O’Neill’s to Dublin. The 1960s promoted an accommodation of the National Question away from traditional understandings of partition:

There seems to have been an acceptance among a majority of nationalists in the republic that a more flexible approach and a more incrementalist attitude towards “unification” might, perhaps, be intrinsically more desirable and, in terms of long-term objectives, more fruitful than mere repetition of fundamental aspirations and the consistent denunciation of the historic injustice and “evil” of partition, which had not really achieved very much in the previous years (Ó Tuathaigh, 1986:77-78).

Though the aspiration towards unification may have been evident it was aspirationally somewhat tied to addressing the realities of the situation of the divided society that is Northern Ireland.

The bounding of Ireland can also be seen in the effects of the Troubles. The explosive impact of the Troubles forced policy-makers, intellectuals and ideologues to reconsider the content of their nationalist discourses. David McWilliams considers the Troubles as having been counter-productive to the mission of traditional Irish nationalism, which he describes as Hibernianism:

ultimately the overall impact of Northern nationalism was to strengthen the cosmopolitan counter-revolution in Ireland. Hibernianism became associated with a vicious nihilistic sectarianism war and the vast majority of us ran a mile from it. It also defined Hibernianism as a negative violent force that could only express itself in opposition to what it wasn't rather than celebrating what it was (2005:219).

Though there have been moments - in 1972 with Bloody Sunday or in 1981 with the impact of The Hunger Strikes - of heightened nationalist sentiments, the dominant feelings towards a united Ireland has been to thoroughly accept the aspirational promotion of unification but placing the possibility of any unification into the distant future. Boland may see that 'natives' in 'The Six Counties... retain their membership of the Irish nation (1984:59), however it is debateable how shared this feeling is throughout Ireland. The distinctive bonding supplied by the idea of an indivisible Irish nation encompassing the totality of the island has been undermined:

The New Ireland is aware of the global, pro-European and inclusive. The image of, and belief in, the new nation is also, by necessity, underpinned by an intellectual and cultural decision that omits Northern Ireland from the equation. The only time that Northern Ireland can be embraced is during those positive times over the recent years when the peace process has been applauded. During the negative times, when the peace process becomes slow and regressive, such as the failure of the first cease-fire, the activities of the Real IRA in Omagh, or during the Orange marching season, the tribalism of the north serves to disqualify itself from membership of the new Ireland (Cronin, <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4i1/cron.htm>).

The sectarianism and the insular nationalists' expressions of Northern Ireland, negotiated as 'excessive introversion', cannot find a comfortable space in 'The New Ireland'. What Northern Ireland can represent is how Ireland and Irish identity was, and could be read as, parochial,

insular and intolerant when the ‘The New Ireland’ stands for ‘the global, pro-European and inclusive’. So though some people may question what it means to be Irish in contemporary Ireland - even dismissing power or meaning to national identity - a bounding around contemporary Irishness as represented by the Republic of Ireland, seems a dominant understanding of how people generally experience Irishness.

## 1.8 Conclusion

A perusal of Irish history from the late Eighteenth century clearly indicates that Irish nationalism was a dominant theme and social force. Sean Cronin’s book on Irish Nationalism, *Irish Nationalism - A History of its Roots and Ideology* (1980), offers a typology of Irish Nationalism that includes five sometimes-overlapping instances of Irish nationalist ideology. Cronin’s (1980) *Strands of Irish Nationalism* are:

1. *traditionalist* which ‘is Catholic and often Gaelic;
2. *constitutional nationalism* which is non-violent, supported and impacted by the Roman Catholic Church and is supportive of ‘Ireland’s right to nationhood as an independent kingdom’;
3. *physical-force republicanism* which is judged by Cronin as a socially conservative force and is inspired by the philosophy of Tone and the United Irishmen;
4. ‘*radical republicanism* argues that there can be no political change without social revolution and stresses the values of the secular state’;
5. *cultural nationalism* that emphasises ‘the nation and its language rather than the state’ (1980:3).

These five themes within Irish nationalism may appear quite unfamiliar to Modern Ireland and contemporary Irish sensibilities. Though we unquestionably could find pockets – or at least some individuals – who could still be identified within Cronin’s typology it would be extremely difficult to maintain that any particular identity or philosophy from the above *Strands of Irish Nationalism* is the dominant hegemonic theme of identity within contemporary Ireland.

The changes affected in Irish identity, between the Traditional Paradigm - represented by Cronin’s *traditionalist* strand of nationalism - and the Modern Paradigm of Irishness can be

somewhat understood in how bell hooks suggests people engage ‘with feminist struggle’ (1984:29). For hooks there is a radically marked distinction between stating “‘I am a feminist’” and stating “‘I advocate feminism’”. While the first statement somewhat closes and fixes the terms of identity the second statement can open a reflexive dialogue:

I have found that saying “I am a feminist” usually means I am plugged into preconceived notions of identity, role and behaviour. When I say “I advocate feminism” the response is usually “what is feminism?” (ibid).

Within Irish identity it can be seen that something of this sort of change has occurred. The ‘I am Irish’ once implied a particular identity that fixed identification around themes of Gaelicism and religious identity. Even if under the Modern Paradigm Irish identity continues to be carried forward as a naturalised sense of identity it certainly seems more attuned to the notion of ‘I advocate Irishness’ as such a statement can usually pose the question ‘What is Irishness?’ Under the command of the Traditional Paradigm there was little space for any ‘I advocate Irishness’ - Irishness was seen and accepted matter-of-factly as Gaelicist and Catholic. The ‘I advocate Irishness’ is suggestive of the space contained within Irish identity under contemporary social conditions; being Irish is not completely closed or fixed around definite markings of identity, though some commentators may wish it was. Highlighting the discursive movement in Irishness is a statement from Eamon O Cuiv that is notable as much for what it does not say as for what it does.

O Cuiv is a member of Fianna Fail and grandson of Eamon de Valera and certainly some of the Traditional Paradigm can still be seen within O Cuiv’s view of Irish identity. His understanding of Irishness as bounded and connected to the cultural practices of the past is evident but it would seem to be a reading of the past influenced by circumstances of the present:

Traditionally, the vast majority of the people living on the island of Ireland, with the exception of the Unionist population of Northern Ireland, have seen their identity as Irish and have recognised that part of that identity is the Irish language, music, dance and games. (<http://www.pobail.ie/ie/raidinanAiri/2003/DeireadhFomhair/htmltext,3886,ie.html>)

Eamon O Cuiv’s understanding of the recognition of Irishness as ‘Traditionally’ shared through ‘Irish language, music, dance and games’ certainly remains a hegemonic theme within some



peoples' conceptualisations of Irishness, but rather obviously what about religion? Why is Catholic missing from O Cuiv's understanding, why did O Cuiv not also say that 'Traditionally, the vast majority of the people living on the island of Ireland... have seen their identity as Irish and Catholic? Eamon O Cuiv's grandfather – Eamon de Valera – had, as has been shown, a very precise understanding of Irishness placing 'emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Gaelic way of life' and of course the Catholic religion (Fuller, 2004:5). It is quite a statement about understanding contemporary Irish identity, influenced by the tradition of the past, that religious identity is absent from O Cuiv's appraisal, suggesting that the understandings of Irish identity have categorically moved away from a closed conceptualisation and towards some recognition that Irish identity can be composed of various factors.

The 1960s also saw more people prepared to question the position of previously established institutions and cultural orientations – not simply the position of the Roman Catholic Church but notions of a Gaelicised Ireland. These questions promoted by the needs of modernisation have undermined the once hegemonic understanding of Irishness around economic self-sufficiency, cultural nationalism, religiosity and national unification. These processes have in many ways lead Eagleton to satirically place Irishness as:

Like mercury, then, Irishness is a slippery thing to wrap one's fingers around. Quite a few people who live on the island don't regard themselves as Irish, while a lot of men and women who have never set foot in the place do (1999:107).

The Modern Paradigm has re-articulated the associations of Irishness away from any permanent fixed meaning and towards various modernised meanings of what is potentially implied within Irishness. Irish society has opened identity outwards to accommodate and be impacted by different influences upon identity - individualisation and globalisation for instance or factors like trans-nationalism and Europeanisation for example. Kearney, writing in 1997, so somewhat pre-dating the added features presented in the contemporary construction of Irishness - the Celtic Tiger and multiculturalism for instance - writes that:

Citizens of these islands do best to think of themselves as 'mongrel islanders' rather than as dwellers in two pure, god-given and rival nation-states. There is no such thing as primordial nationality. Every nation is a hybrid construct, an 'imagined' community which can be reimagined again in alternative versions.

The ultimate challenge is to acknowledge this process of ongoing hybridization from which we derive and to which we are constantly subject (1997:188).

Though contemporary Irishness may not fully acknowledge in its construction these markings of 'hybrid' and 'hybridization' there has certainly been a movement towards realising how 'reimagined' Irishness is. That Irishness is a changed social field, certainly from anything offered by Cronin in his *Strands of Irish Nationalism*, would seem universally accepted within the discourse surrounding contemporary Irish identity. Though the constituents of Irishness certainly appear to have changed it can also be understood that Irishness itself remains firmly embedded within the social construction of identity. For instance differing conceptualisations of Modern Ireland show how particular social commentators can struggle to highlight collectively shared identificatory characterisations of contemporary Irish identity. However, rather obviously, commentators - O'Toole, O'Connell, Cronin, McWilliams or O'Reilly for instance - can all imply some meaning in Irishness, even if it only has its origins and meaning in some implied minimal bond of collective consumerism.

This chapter is designed to give some impression not only of how Irish identity may have changed but suggesting some features that may impact upon contemporary understandings of Irish identity. Before we begin questioning young peoples' understanding of Irish identity we have to offer some necessarily theoretical suggestions that may help highlight issues of contemporary Irish identification. The following Chapter will consider some theoretical input into understanding the Nation and how this can impact upon the social construction of identities. These theoretical considerations will substantiate the following consideration of Irish identities and how they may be experienced by young people in Twenty-first century Dublin.

# Chapter 2

## Theorising the Nation

Bauman has written how national identity can stand for some people as simply 'taking itself for granted' (1989:53). Bellig (1995) positions how people in the Western world experience the nation through banal nationalism. Far from the idea that national identity is decreasing in importance for people in Ireland, as suggested by some in the previous chapter, Bellig sees nationality as an 'endemic condition' (1995:6) in contemporary Western societies. Bellig writes how:

In routine practices and everyday discourses, especially those in the mass media, the idea of nationhood is regularly flagged. Even the daily weather forecast can do this. Through such flagging, established nations are reproduced as nations, with their citizenry being unmindfully reminded of their national identity (1996:156).

It certainly can be conceded that national identities, as generally acting upon an individual, seem to have the quality that something is accepted and generally self-understood about national identity but often difficult to describe. One may know or feel - typically it is claimed by a nationalist that this feeling is intuitively understood - what it *is* to be a member of a particular national grouping but have difficulties articulating what this *is* is. In the last chapter we considered the particular placement of Irish identity under differing social conditions and so considered something of the *is* of Irishness. In this chapter our concern will be focused not so much on the constituent *is* of national identity but rather the theoretical *what is* that may describe a national identity and how it can be mobilised and affect identifications.

This chapter will question what it is that people imply when making reference to the Nation and question how this form of identity can often simply take 'itself for granted' as something natural and given. However theorising and positioning an agreed understanding of what is a Nation is a greater challenge than offering particular constituents that may be suggested as evident within the *ideal* or *practice* of any specific national identity. We could position *national character traits* - no matter if stereotyped or practiced, as it is about suggesting what

marks and makes a particular common understanding - that may express Englishness, Irishness or Germanness, but finding agreement on what may be distinctively shared between these identities, suggesting each represents something that comfortably fits an encompassing definition of a Nation, is unquestionably more challenging. Calhoun writes that the definition of the Nation cannot be fixed, as what we see around us globally is 'a common pattern, not a precise definition' (1997:5). Certainly how national identity can be experienced between individuals suggests 'a common pattern, not a precise definition'. It was seen in the context of Ireland that the Nation can, and does, mean different things to different people. It is not only people in Ireland but equally people in Brazil, France or Australia that have differing investments in their own self-understandings of what meaning national identity implies. Though defining an all-encompassing and generally accepted notion of the Nation is unquestionably a problematic exercise, we will develop an idea of what the Nation is by following Anthony Smith's (2001) positioning of two fundamental ways of defining the Nation; through objective criteria or through subjective criteria.

This chapter will show that the objective approach towards defining the Nation fails to address how national identity is fundamentally experienced. Though Smith may well be correct that perennial attitudes - which imply something of an objective reading of identity - are held by 'many members of the public' (2001:49) what can be constituted as objective markers of identity is impacted by social relations. Rather than focusing on objective criteria as defining the Nation it will be argued that a subjective approach is more appropriate and rewarding. The central theorists considered in elaborating this subjective approach will be David Miller and Benedict Anderson. The subjective approach is not only the dominant sociological means of understanding what is inferred by the Nation but importantly, it will be argued, this is also the best means of trying to comprehend what the Nation may mean in contemporary Irish society.

A clear theme that will emerge from the consideration of the Nation will be how theorists consider a particular bounded-ness around the conceptualisation and experiences of national identity. For example both Anderson and Miller each write into their separate definitions of the Nation a sense that this is experienced as bounded against other identities. At a common-sense level this is very understandable considering that any comprehension of the Nation must have inscribed within its very construction the notion of national differentiation. This concept of bounded collective identity is increasingly seen as challenged by some theorists. Though one can

write that trans-national, or particularly globalising features, might undermine the sense of national bounded-ness, and so importantly loosen the bonds that are implied by national identity, in the context of Ireland a greater challenge to national identity - as bounded and shared identity - is generally argued as affected by the assumed individualising tendency of contemporary modern society. When Eagleton can rightly point out that Ireland has greatly lacked 'any very vigorous tradition of liberal individualism' (2003:53) many people, as we saw in Chapter 1, seem to understand Irishness as now itself fundamentally marked by 'liberal individualism'. The meaning of this 'individualism' suggests that people in Ireland are less nationally focused in their sources or expressions of identification and that there prevails an emphasis upon individual identity rather than collective identity. This view can be seen as almost shared across the spectrum of debate regarding the discourse of contemporary Irish identity. It can be seen in David McWilliams celebration of the many social changes in Ireland over the recent period and it is also a view taken by John Waters, who criticises many of the social changes in Ireland over recent years. The one certain factor many commentators on the discourse of Irish identity would seem to share is some idea that 'There is a spectre haunting Ireland - the spectre of individualism' (O'Connell, 2001:181).

Looking at Bauman, Beck and Giddens we will see a challenge to how the Nation is generally proposed as an encompassing, collectivising identity to one that places identity as more individually experienced and constructed and can suggest that notions of national identity can even be radically displaced in significance. Though people's identification towards the Nation has always been uneven - not all people can share the exact same specific experience or specific meaning towards a particular national identity - it will be seen that Giddens, Beck and Bauman each suggest that establishing a nationally shared identity under contemporary social conditions is seen as increasingly demanding. For these theorists individualising tendencies undermine the emotional framework of national identification, making national identity less powerful in determining identity but empowering the individual with some freedom in choosing their own identifications. We shall begin by asking the question What is The Nation?

## 2.1 What is The Nation?

As indicated in the introduction Smith suggests two fundamental approaches towards defining a Nation, the first of which is an objective approach. This approach demands certain features - shared language or history for instance - must exist for some form of Nationhood to exist. The most damaging and extreme case in modern Europe of the objective approach towards the Nation can be found in Hitler with his placement of nationality/race within genetic determinism:

It is idle to argue which race or races were the original representatives of human culture and hence the real founders of all that we sum up under the word 'humanity'. It is simpler to raise the question with regard to the present, and here an easy, clear answer results. All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan (1969:263).

For Hitler, quite obviously, race/nation was for him objectively hierarchicalised and determined by both individual and collective ability. Smith (2001) in addressing the objective approach uses the instance of Stalin as a theorist promoting an objective definition of the Nation.

With Stalin particular features mark the existence of the Nation, and without these features any supposed Nation would have effectively failed to pass Stalin's legitimacy test:

*A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture* (Stalin, 1994:20, italics in original)

Smith (2001), drawing on Weber, feels the limitation in such approaches relates to the inability to capture other expressions of national sentiments which wholly objective criteria attempt to rule out of any definition. For instance how is one to understand what *The Irish Nation* is when, according to Ignatiev, understanding oneself as *truly Irish* in Eighteenth century Ireland involved the exclusion of Roman Catholics - the majority of the indigenous population - and a Gaelic identity from being 'the true representatives of Ireland' (1995:36). We can clearly see Smith's criticism of Stalin when we understand that Stalin proposed that 'There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages' (1994:19). With the evidence of multi-lingual or bi-lingual societies - Wales, India, Canada, Spain, Switzerland, America or China - suggesting that some form of a unifying national identity can certainly develop, or be sustained, without the need

for an enveloping singular language (Bellington *et al.*, 1998). Miller (1995) feels a limitation in trying to understand what may be inferred by the Nation is to start to attempt to categorise nations by looking first for assumed shared characteristics - like a common language - which loses the important point that feelings of national identity are dependent upon mutual recognition. There are many different societies that speak French - France, Morocco, Algeria, Congo or Haiti - but not all these French speaking societies would mutually recognise co-language users as therefore co-nationals.

Though supposed objective factors - such as 'The ideal Gael' in the Irish context or the use of a particular language - can be fashioned to mark a particular national identity it certainly cannot be assumed that objective markers of identity cover all national identities or indeed importantly, that objective markers are freed from subjective judgement. Wallace (1997), though considering ethnic and racial differentiation his point could be extended to national identification, understands that subjective judgment out-weighs objective criteria of identification because subjectively held beliefs may radically diverge with what may even be the historical objective fact. For instance contemporary Irish self-understanding may dominantly resonate around the conceptualisation of Irish people having been decidedly anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and always having shared some understanding towards the position of historical subservience to Britain. But what if the historical facts showed that many Irish people welcomed union with Britain or would have been satisfied with Home Rule and not an independent state, or that a great many Irish people were fully implicated and ideologically committed to servicing the British Empire? Jarausch *et al.* have written that the relevance of concrete historical events is not in necessarily understanding what may have happened or for what reasons, but rather their significance lies in 'their careful arrangement in a master narrative that presents a highly selective but all the more compelling account of common destiny' (1997:25). Historical fact may be one thing but how collective identities and individuals negotiate historical fact seems concerned with subjective judgements and the operation of social power. For instance Garvin's (1987) point that the sociality of Gaelic societies markedly deviated from how late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century Gaelicist ideology presented them is suggestive not so much of a selective reading of history as creating a history to fit the nationalising demands of Gaelicist ideology.

Instead of employing an objective approach towards defining a Nation we will instead emphasise a subjective understanding. Subjective approaches undermine the demands for objectively quantified criteria and instead of a dependency upon implied objective criteria I shall emphasise an approach involving ‘sentiment, will, imagination and perception as criteria of the nation and national belonging’ (Smith, 2001:11). A more nuanced view towards understanding the nation and national identity is evident within this approach where, for instance, national identity is, like other collective identities like gender or ethnicity, considered socially constructed. This approach is grounded in modernist’s theorising about the social processes that generate and sustain views towards national identity. Smith offers five various mixtures that comprise for him an ‘overall modernist paradigm’ towards defining the Nation:

1. Socioeconomic
2. Sociocultural
3. Political
4. Ideological
5. Constructionist (2001, 48-49)

Though these approaches to the Nation and national identity do diverge, for Smith their commonality lies within the shared understanding of modernity:

Despite their differences, these varieties of the paradigm of modernity all share a belief in what one might call ‘structural modernism’. There is no ‘contingent modernism’, no simple observation of an historical correlation between nationalism and modernity, but a belief in the inherently national, and nationalist, nature of modernity (Smith, 2001:48).

The Nation is for Tom Nairn, whom Smith places as following a socio-economic strand, ‘in the structure of the modern world’ (1997:206). A central and influential theorist of the constructionist approach, which has significantly influenced academic discussion about the Nation and views towards national identity, is Benedict Anderson. Writing in *Imagined Communities*, Anderson defines the nation as ‘an imagined political community’ (1991:6). The Nation has to be imagined, for Anderson, because any community greater than one based upon personal contact has to be imagined:



because the members of even the smallest nation will never know of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1991:6).

It is rather obvious that not all Irish people can meet each other individually and yet, following from Anderson's position, historically a strong bond of national 'communion' has indeed been shared in Ireland. This bond could transcend quite powerful social cleavages and network people into some shared sense and meaning around Irish identity. For Anderson there are three elements attached to understanding the nation or understanding the 'style' that the nation can be imagined:

1. The nation is imagined as *limited*
2. The nation is imagined as *sovereign*
3. The nation is imagined as *community* (1991:6-7).

As a general social constructionist approach will be employed for framing young peoples understanding toward Irishness I shall look at each of Anderson's points in turn. In looking at each of Anderson's points I shall broaden out the discussion by also bringing in the views of other theorists in helping to refine how the Nation and national identity can be understood. Most important, in this respect, is David Miller, who can certainly be seen as overlapping with Anderson's approach in some areas but can also, in some respects, be regarded as drawing the meaning of the Nation, and its affect upon identifications, more tightly than Anderson.

For Miller the nation is marked around five related elements:

- (1) constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment,
- (2) extended in history,
- (3) active in character,
- (4) connected to a particular territory, and
- (5) marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture (1995:27).

Clarke and Jones readily offer Miller's definition of the nation, in their introduction to *The Rights of Nations*, as a workable negotiation between the 'unwarranted sharpness and unworkable vagueness' that can accompany definitions of the Nation (1999:9). We have already seen something of both the 'unwarranted sharpness and unworkable vagueness' in the context of Irish identity in the previous chapter. We have seen that some commentators dispute the notion

of a commonly shared contemporary Irish identity outside of some tenuous liberalism and we have also seen that the construction of idealised Gaelicist Ireland, certainly an instance in ‘unwarranted sharpness’, makes particularly austere demands upon collective and individual identity. Certainly for Clarke and Jones (1999) how Miller approaches the nation and national identity is how we practically negotiate the meaning of the Nation in contemporary society.

### ***2.1.1 The nation is imagined as limited***

Despite the Nation being mediated it is imagined as internally cohesive, nationally differentiated and bounded having ‘finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations’ (Anderson, 1991:7). The idea underlining national identity presumes that the world is then divided into segmented and differentiated national identities (Smith, 1999). Calhoun (1997) feels the underlining conceptualising of the Nation is thoroughly internationalised as it is dependent on this comparison with other national identities for any understanding of what may be implied by any one national identity. We have already seen something of how this operates in the context of Irishness where Collins, Pearse and de Valera each understood that Irishness was bounded within a conceptualised ‘ideal Gael’ which could be placed against the influence of ‘other nations’ or particularly an Other nation; England.

Though a nation is often imagined as fixed in some points - territory for instance - that actively separates one nation from another, it can also be appreciated how the Nation can have an unbounded ‘elastic’ imagination. Adrian Hasting (1997) highlights how national boundaries can change but this need not impact upon how the Nation is itself necessarily generally experienced:

The frontiers of a nation are not unalterable. It does not invalidate the existence of a nation in, say, 1700, that it did not then include territory and ethnicities today fully incorporated within it. A nation can grow in size while remaining substantially the same reality. The fact that it was only in the nineteenth century that Switzerland was extended to include the Italian-speaking Ticino and some French-speaking areas, including Geneva, does not mean that the Swiss could not have been a nation before that date (1997:26).

To accommodate social and political change - the incorporation of different regional, local or perhaps even ethnic identities for instance - would seem to require certain elasticity with how the nation can itself be imagined. In the context of Ireland one could cite the increasing recognition

of the British identity in Ireland and how being British is increasingly an accepted understanding towards Unionists' and Loyalists' identities. Recognition of the British identity in Ireland quite obviously does not distract or 'does not invalidate the existence of a [Irish] nation'.

Though national identity would certainly seem to have a pliable ability to alter the contours of how identification can be articulated the idea of the Nation can, however, typically be anchored to what it is not. Anderson writes that 'No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind' (1991:7) and this bounded anchoring may not make it any clearer what a specific, particular nation is, but it does point at what it is not:

People may be hard pressed to say explicitly what the national character of their peoples consists in, and yet have an intuitive sense, when confronted with foreigners, of where the differences lie. National identities can remain unarticulated, and yet exercise a pervasive influence on people's behaviour (Miller, 1995:27).

This is a similar point shared by Bellington *et al.* that when people travel outside of their nations they then hold their nationality as part of a 'taken-for-granted identity' (1998:167). Cronin (1980) may feel there is little cultural distinctions between Ireland and England but the on-the-ground experience of either Irishness or Englishness - or being Irish in England or being English in Ireland - would still point to a felt and experienced difference between *being English* and *being Irish*. To paraphrase Anderson, no Irish nation would consider itself coterminous with an English nation and no English nation would consider itself coterminous with an Irish nation.

There is then a bounded-ness to the extent of national identification as it operates on some level of differentiation and this differentiation connects to a sense of cultural distinction between one national identity and another. This differentiation allows some level of shared understanding 'that the people belong together by virtue of the characteristics that they share' (Miller, 1995:25). Being Irish, or Scottish or Swedish, has an implicit understanding that is both distinguishable from other identities but encompassed within some loose over-arching similarity of a mutually received national identity. This sense of mutual recognition may be projected as thin - as with how some commentators suggest the place of national identity in contemporary Ireland - or as a rather more substantive bond of association but the importance of shared recognition is an essential element for identifying, both the self and others, within a national frame of reference. This mutual recognition can importantly lay a claim upon the individual:

So when I identify myself as belonging to a particular nation, I imply that those whom I include as my co-nationals share my beliefs and reciprocate my commitments (Miller, 1995:23).

Miller employs Renan's theme of 'a daily plebiscite' to emphasise how people's sense of national similarity overlaps with their consent to identify with a particular Nation. If people were reticent about national identity - if it did not fit their own sense of collective self - they could resist being members or reject identification towards the Nation, but quite clearly people in general do not reject their national identity, though of course specific implied constituents could be rejected. The on-going practice of many people continuing to identify with their nations suggests some acceptance of the legitimacy of national identity itself. As Girvin writes about the 'success of nationalism', it 'provides evidence that large numbers of individuals could share', and indeed continue to share, 'in a political community with others who they might never meet' (2002:3).

Though Miller may feel that there is a sense of national collectedness for people around 'characteristics that they share', it is obviously problematic to suggest what these 'characteristics' are. However Miller does not see national identity as somewhat measurably fixed and 'exclude[ing] critical assessment' (1995:127). This is a point highlighted in the last chapter where the multifarious constituents of national identity that people in general may identify with can change dramatically. It could certainly be argued that a level of 'critical assessment' was applied to how Irish identity may have been understood in 1925 or in 1945 against how it might be understood in 2005. The idea of a 'common public culture' bounding the Nation, as offered by Miller, does not disallow other collective identifications, rather all that is needed for Miller is the popular belief in 'a people with a distinct and common character of its own' (ibid). Popularly this might be expressed in a felt difference between Irish and Polish identity or in generally internalised feelings that to be Irish is to be somehow simply different from other nationalities. Miller's 'common public culture', by necessity, 'will leave room for different private cultures within the nation' (1995:26). People can comprehend and engage with other collective communities of identification, and membership of one particular community need not rule out the possibility of a felt membership of another community of collective identification. Irish Travellers, Jews, Christians or Muslims may each have particular identifiable characteristics of their own but there is absolutely no obstacle for Muslims, Jews, Travellers or Christians to identify themselves as Irish, unless of course the definition of Irishness explicitly

excludes such identities. As Miller rightly highlights a 'common public culture' does not necessarily demand that 'national identity be monolithic and all-embracing' (ibid) and fixed and forever defined with specific characteristics. The collective cultures underpinning identities can and do certainly change. Nations can be marked as much for their diversity as for the implied internal similarity. Even when Irishness was somewhat constructed through Catholicism this did not prevent the election of a Jewish TD, Robert Briscoe, to the Irish parliament when Catholicism was one of the dominant tools for constructing and understanding Irishness.

The nation then is experienced as differentiated and distinct but this need not rule out other forms of identification. National identity is a generalised identity and those markings of identity that are underpinned by collective identification are implicated in a process of social exchange and negotiated selection that cannot completely envelop all individual identities in totality. However with a sense of national identification there is a widespread feeling of shared-ness expressed in the common feeling that each particular society has its own specific national characteristics 'beyond which lie other nations' (Anderson, 1991:7) which are also understood as sharing their own national culture and particular characteristics which are 'the bearer of a distinctive identity' (Calhoun, 1997:45).

### ***2.1.2 The nation is imagined as sovereign***

Anderson marks the idea of the Nation as a development within European modernity with modernity connected to challenging particular political and social relations. The Nation was emphasised as a challenge to 'the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm' (Anderson, 1991:7). The Nation, representing the people, would be placed as the legitimate centre and concern of rule; *the good of The Nation would be synonymous with the good of the people*. This radical embodiment of freedom - the breaking with the 'dynastic realm' - is represented by how 'nations dream of being free' and how some people see this freedom as represented within 'the sovereign state' (ibid). The Nation, and the people, then to be free must be given the ability to self-rule or participate, or have their national interests served, within defined national borders. It can certainly be appreciated how the mobilisation of *the people* through the notion of the Nation can promote a bounded-ness to identity and imply that the people of a Nation share in a differentiated identity that requires political expression. Eagleton, for instance, rightly points out that it was 'revolutionary nationalism' that 'was by far the most

successful radical tide of the twentieth century' because it could, and importantly did, mobilised *the people* against oppression (2003:11).

Calhoun shares this point with Anderson that 'nationalism grew out of popular challenges to the authority and legitimacy of those at the top of modern states. A crucial thread in the development of nationalism was the idea - and eventually the taken-for-granted, gut level conviction - that political power could only be legitimate when it reflected the will, or at least served the interests, of the people subject to it' (1997:69). Giddens places the conception of sovereignty as something of a necessary condition upon the historical development of nationalism:

Nationalism, like the nation-state, is a phenomenon generated originally from within Europe, and I think it is right to stress that it would not have emerged without the bourgeois idea of popular sovereignty that ushered in the modern phase of European liberalism (1987:177).

The notion then 'of popular sovereignty' may be placed as completely central to the mobilisation of the Nation for Giddens. However emphasising how the Nation can be imagined, in Anderson's sense, under changing social conditions, Giddens highlights that globalisation undermines the notion of sovereignty, where 'Sovereignty is no longer an all-or-nothing matter, if it ever was: boundaries are becoming fuzzier than they used to be' (1998:32). Though the promotion of national self-determination and sovereignty may have been a necessary condition for the development of European nations and though sovereignty may be undermined in particular contemporary societies, Calhoun (1997) emphasises that it is not the actual exercise of sovereignty that defines a nation. Rather we understand views towards the nations as 'constituted by the claims [such as sovereignty] themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sort of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices' (ibid). Even then if sovereignty is undermined this need not lead away from national identification - or even lead away from the emergence of new currently unrecognised Nations from materialising - as the important point is that people can continue to understand the Nation around points that imply meanings that 'produce collective identity'. Therefore though sovereignty may have been instrumental in the development of the Nation it remains an important understanding in the reproduction of national identity. People can be embedded in the nationalising discourse emphasising the significance of national sovereignty

and legitimacy. This issue of sovereignty can lead some theorists to suggest that it was states, with a concern towards legitimacy and control, which essentially created Nations.

With Ernest Gellner one can see how this relationship of states - or aspiring state elites - creating nations was argued to have been operationalised in the interest of power. Given the political centrality of the Nation from the nineteenth century to the present, Gellner's approach is undoubtedly challenging to those people who may view their sense of national identity as natural and connected to an understanding that places their nation as simply having permanently or historically existed in some form. The ability for mobilising social consent is very evident in how Gellner negotiated the Nation. Gellner defined nationalism as the belief 'that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (1983:1). For Gellner there is one specific contravention of this code that can stimulate national consciousness:

if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled, this, for nationalists, constitutes a quite outstandingly intolerable breach of political propriety (ibid).

Certainly in the context of Irish history from the seventeenth, if not indeed before, to the twentieth century the 'outstandingly intolerable breach' can be appreciated with sporadic resistance to English/British rule in Ireland and how this could be mobilised and expressed as a national resistance. For Gellner (1983) the Nation is very much tied to the political unit; the state should uphold, promote and maintain the integrity of the Nation otherwise the social field can open to intra-national conflict. National identity is thoroughly modern in Gellner's view and is developed through the needs of industrialisation and employed by the state - or employed by oppositional nationalists - to gain the allegiance of the population (Gellner, 1983). There is, of course, a major limitation in Gellner's modernist approach, which can also be levelled at Anderson; how to tackle any suggestion of the idea of pre-modern Nations.

Certainly Hastings positions modernist understandings within a field where 'nationalism is a very modern phenomenon about which you cannot reasonably speak before late eighteenth century; [where] nationalism, moreover, precedes the nation' (1997:9). Counter-wise Hastings feels such modernist understandings, dated at '1789 or thereabouts' with the American drive for independence, seriously fails to account for the pre-1789 developments and expressions of national identity; so modernists '*skewed the whole*' understanding of the nation by only being

concerned with national identity post-1789 (1997:11, italics added). It is not that Hastings is rejecting the modernist idea but rather he is taking a longer historical view of the nation:

In particular it [modernism] impairs an understanding of the nation-nationalism relationship because while in the later period [modernity] nationalism may have often preceded nations rather than the reverse, in the earlier period [pre-modernity] it is far truer to say that nations as they grew more self-conscious, or came under threat, produced nationalisms (ibid).

Though Gellner and Anderson may dispute the notion of nations existing in the pre-modern period certainly Hastings (1997) points at historical evidence that the English, and indeed the Irish, had a pre-modern understanding of their distinctive national identity. Nations then may be imagined as sovereign but they may have been imagined as sovereign entities for a great deal longer than the mobilisation for popular sovereignty represented by either the American or French Revolutions suggest.

However in defence of the modernist approach it should be emphasised that nations provoke a particular ‘style’ of imagination (Anderson, 1991:6). Anderson offers the instance of Javanese villagers who, for him, have ‘always known’ of some connection shared with other people through ‘indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship’, but for Anderson this relationship was ‘imagined particularistically’ (ibid). The ‘style’ of the Nation can be argued to be imagined generalisable where there is some expectation that those other people who also identify with the Nation are suggesting something of a commonly shared identity that encompasses a space well beyond the confines of a village, town or city. It is not that expressions of Irish identity, and some understanding of an Irish nation, did not exist in thirteenth or fourteenth century Ireland but the ‘style’ of its imagination need not have networked people in Cork, Meath, Galway or Dublin into a commonly shared and bounded national imagination accepted as different from other national identities.

### ***2.1.3 The nation is imagined as community***

The final element of Anderson’s understanding relates to how the Nation is experienced as community:

regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (1991:7).



This sense of community is central to how people negotiate their understandings of national identity. People within the nation share an identity that binds one person to another within a shared sense of community or mutual interest. Anderson highlights the important ability of how this 'horizontal comradeship' has permitted millions of people to both kill and 'die for such limited imaginings' (ibid), which certainly suggests that the nation can have some power to provoke feelings of solidarity.

Within the idea of the National Community there is the 'sense of shared identity between people living in complex modern societies' (Bellington *et al.* 1998:170). The idea then of the Nation implies some sense of mutual recognition and belongingness. How this sense of community can be developed and experienced is seen in Miller's understanding of national identity as 'an active identity' whereby national activity celebrates national identity, national achievements or failures and negotiates and develops a general sense of being collectively bound together within the national frame (1995:24). This is in contrast to other modes of identity, for instance religious identity. Miller sees religious identity as grounded in an understanding of identity that is 'essentially a passive one' where religious adherers are 'responding to the prompting of God; here the group's purpose is not to do or decide, but to interpret as best it can the messages and commands of an external source' (ibid). Of course, it is highly disputable whether decisiveness is evident or not in interpreting 'the messages and commands of an external source', certainly the passiveness of a religious identity is highly questionable in certain contexts but, in fairness to Miller, the active character of national identity seems well-established with how people generally subjectively negotiate their own sense of national identity as connected to others.

National imaginings, in the shape of a felt community, do have some hold over people's sense of self-identification, having the ability to socially unify but also relegate or remove from consciousness particular social divisions - class, gender or ethnic for instance - that might otherwise encourage social disunity or social disorder. National connectedness, through the contents and contexts of national imaginations, places individuals within an embedded nationalised relationship that makes it extremely difficult for individuals to 'think outside the ideological discourses' of their particular society (Bellington *et al.* 1998:186). As Anderson rightly points out, 'nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our times' (1991:3). We are saturated and socialised within a national discourse that emphasises the

connections we share towards the nation and people within that nation. Puri gives us some impression of this operational generality in the United States:

symbols such as flags, and repetitions throughout the media of national community and national interests, and the national map displayed on television weather reports, are a few of the ways in which we are constantly reminded of the America nation (2004:11).

It is not only how Puri highlights that ‘nations come into existence as the result of active political and cultural intervention’ (2004:34) but indeed it is how strongly these interventions are received through their active production and reproduction of ‘political and cultural’ articulations that mark the activeness of the nation. As Bellington *et al.* point out ‘a sense of self, of personal identity, involves identification with a wider group, and this may have a political dimension; it is concerned with the relative power position and common interests of that group. Once we move beyond primary groups such as our family, we begin to identify with others on the basis of interest’ (1998:170). We are surrounded by a nationalising discourse that suggests individual interest is tied to national interest or tied to a common interest with other people in the nation. Puri feels ‘the intangible spirit of nationalism relies on its constant reiteration’ (2004:11) and this ‘constant reiteration’ is quite evident in how the Nation, or Irishness, was and is projected, received and reproduced. The activeness of identity is shared at Irish election times, on sporting occasions, at cultural events or when there are national moments of crisis ‘we’ in Ireland, as with people in the United States, ‘are constantly reminded’ and presented with some picture of the Nation.

National identities can unquestionably employ a deeply felt social reality upon our individual and collective being. As Poole writes:

For most of us, our national identity was not chosen, but determined by the contingency which makes this identity seem morally suspect. How can something so arbitrary, over which I have had such little control, determine a significant part of my moral agenda? Part of the answer lies in the fact that these contingencies have become pervasive and inescapable features of our lives. They come to us in the language we speak, the culture we identify with, and the political responsibilities we may evade but which we cannot escape (2003:274).

Even when the accident of birth can determine our nationality we are pulled into national identification through ‘pervasive and inescapable features’ that grounds us in our society. In explaining this ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ Giddens offers ‘psychological phenomenon’ (1987:178) which act to comfort the individual against both the waning of tradition and how the modern world can be experienced as disconnected. For Giddens national identity offers a degree of support for establishing or maintaining ontological security:

Ontological security means the security of taken-for-granted routines, giving a sense of the continuity of being... in large-scale society, in which routinization has substantially replaced tradition – where moral meaning and self-identity have retreated to the margins of the private and the public – feelings of commonality of language and belongingness in a national community tend to form one strand contributing to the maintenance of ontological security (ibid).

This approach is somewhat repeated by Poole:

[national] identity provides us with a land in which we are at home, a history which is ours, and a privileged access to a vast heritage of culture and creativity. It not only provides us with the means to understand this heritage; it also assures us that it is ours. If on occasion the nation may require that we endure losses and hardships on its behalf, it also makes available a fund of meanings, pleasures and rewards beyond anything that we are likely to find in our individual lives (2003:272).

We have some ownership in collective national identity; *a shared community of interest and identity*. National identities are appealing because they are rewarding; they promise remembrance and they promise individual re-affirmation. How this can be appreciated in forming a sense of community is in the feelings of historical continuity that national identity suggests and indeed promotes.

The Nation is constructed and visualised as present in the history of *who you are* as a member of that nation. We identify ourselves with the historical actions and events that were conducted, or have been made to look conducted, as safe-guarding the integrity of the Nation; actions in Ireland - 1798 or 1916 - that in some ways speak to us about who we are. We engage with the Nation subjectively as having some objective historical reality. It is not only that history can ground the nations in ‘the mists of time’ (Miller, 1995:23) but a national history can be

connected and employed to actually determine a reading of a national identity. This can quite clearly be seen in how Pearse negotiated the idea of Irish history where ‘the national demand of Ireland is fixed and determined’ (1976:31) and of course this was underpinned by the projected cultural distinctive-ness of Irishness.

The extension into history need not be the factual reading of history but subjectively this is how we generally encounter it. As Calhoun rightly points out nations may or may not show historical continuity but the operation of national identity ‘posits temporal depth and internal integration’ (1997:11). We have seen how the ‘The ideal Gael’ was employed to present a grounded history of Irishness and how this shaped the nationalising discourse of late nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland even when this historical association is problematic, so reinforcing a point made by Miller:

Dispassionate research is likely to reveal considerable discontinuity, both in the character of the people who have occupied a given territory, and in their customs and practices. It is also likely to reveal that many things now regarded as primordial features of the nation in question are in fact artificial inventions – indeed, very often deliberate inventions made to serve a political purpose (1995:35).

This is a theme already explicitly encountered in Gellner above; that idea that national identifications had been politically constructed and operationalised in the interest of promoting social control. However irrespective of why or how any nation came into existence it should be appreciated that how people in general interact with national identity may imply a negotiation grounded in experiencing ‘primordial features of the nation’. No matter if ‘deliberate inventions’ can be cited people generally approach national identity with the implicit understandings of historical continuity that is not simply a recognition of the past but is a feature of the present and the projected future:

The historic national community is a community of obligation. Because our forebears have toiled and split their blood to build and defend the nation, we who are born into it inherit an obligation to continue their work, which we discharge partly towards our contemporaries and partly towards our descendants (Miller, 1995:23).

Our 'community of obligation' extends beyond the present into the future. The future orientation of nationality promotes and generally establishes nationalised meanings in contemporary social environments. Few people would expect Ireland not to exist in one hundred or even one thousand years time for instance. Irishness may be projected as radically different in the future but the bonds of national continuity are generally held to be stable in the sense that being Irish could imply something meaningful.

Certainly a sense of history can ground an individual within a nation. Wallace emphasises this bond but it is the future continuity of national identity that he regards as a more powerful pull upon identity:

a specifically *national* solidarity lies not in the presumption of some lines of past descent that its followers already share but in its prediction of some future destiny that they will share... where the rallying-cry of families, kinship groups, ethnic groups, and racial groups is descent-oriented ("Blood is thicker than water!") the rally-cry of nationality groups is destiny-oriented ("Towards a better future for all") (1997:32).

Certainly Wallace views national identity as a powerful explanatory device that directly addresses individuals questioning of identity; national identity is able to account for a past, to suggest a future and then importantly to locate the individual in the present. If the nationalising environment can look simultaneously backwards and forwards it is, as Miller (1995) highlights, an extremely difficult identity for individuals to step outside or reject. A rejection of national identity would involve not simply rejecting a reading of the collective past but rejecting a particular reading of the collective future and would importantly imply a radical re-evaluation of how the overwhelming majority of people generally understand themselves and others as living in a world dominated by nations. As Smith highlights 'nations and nationalism have become inter-class, mass phenomena. All kinds of social groups and classes, up and down the social scale, have become attached to their nation' (1999:27). Even considering the 'actual inequality and exploitation' that does prevail within nations it is a testimony to the bonding of national and self-identity that even when the 'actual inequality and exploitation' is highlighted, it can be through, not outside, the discourse of the Nation. For instance James Connolly thoroughly nationalised his political message, where 'the first duty of Irishmen is to reconquer their country - to take it back from those whose sole right to its ownership is based upon conquest' (1986:92),

even though he was himself tied to a sense of internationalism. An attachment to the Nation - 'the spiritual conception of the separate identity of the Irish race' for Connolly (1986:47) and where O'Brien (1972) sees Connolly's use of race as related to Catholic people in Ireland only - has clearly been a paramount means by which people have expressed themselves even when engaging with the 'actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail' within particular nations.

Though there may be some consensus that national identification can unite and suggest something of a common community of interest, there is dispute over the level of this unity and what it may mean. Smith raises a particular criticism of Anderson in that he significantly underestimates the emotional bonds implied within national identification; nations are 'as much communities of emotion and will, as of imagination and cognition' (2001:80). Though Anderson obviously recognises 'a deep, horizontal comradeship' it is not as collectively deep or as socially powerful as Smith would see it:

why is it that so many people are prepared to lay down their lives for what is a cultural artefact and an invention of their imaginations? How is it that this particular invented tradition can arouse such passion? (1999:27).

A person's identity can be totally bounded within a national understanding so much so that 'our identities, needs and interests, our very survival' are determined by our national attachments, 'that we feel such devotion to them and are ready to sacrifice so much for them' (Smith, 2001:80). Calhoun somewhat follows this approach seeing that national identity promotes not only the sense that your individuality is co-terminous with your nationality but how a 'discourse of nationalism' fundamentally 'promotes categorical identities over relational ones' (1997:46). The Nation promotes a generalised mediated identity where to be Irish, English, German or Serb may be understood and potentially affect our commitments and actions more than to be a father, son, daughter, worker or boss. Emphasising the potential power this can contain Calhoun writes of how 'Nationalism offers the chilling potential for children to inform on their parents' infractions against the nation precisely because each individual is understood to derive his or her identity in such a direct and basic ways from membership in the nation' (ibid). It undoubtedly can be conceded that the power of the nation has at times dictated the action of many people. For example in the last chapter it was shown how fundamentally important Roman Catholicism was for constructing a sense of Irishness and even though religion had some connection with Irish identity, White (1980) rightly highlights that if there is a perceived explicit conflict of interest

between the Nation and religion, many people in Ireland have taken the side of the Nation over the commands of their religion, during the Civil War for instance.

Though Anderson recognises the potential of solidarity and sacrifice suggested by the Nation, Smith can certainly be seen to embed the feelings the nation produces as both emotionally more significant than Anderson allows but also more attuned to the commands the Nation might make. Smith not only questions how aware Anderson is of the emotional bonds that compel and network people into the Nation but even Anderson's 'fraternal' characterisation of the nation (1991:7) seems, certainly for Smith, grounded in an elitist construction of identity with Anderson dependent upon viewing 'the nation through the cognitive lens of its intellectual and artistic purveyors, in terms of the concept of 'imagination'' (2001:82-83). What of the popular communal lens? The Nation is indeed nothing if not popular. As Gellner rightly points out the nation-less person places a particular 'strain on the modern imagination' (1983:6).

Smith seems correct that certain theorists fail to grasp the emotional importance of national identity within many societies for many people. It is not a 'deep, horizontal comradeship', rather the bonds of national identity can be felt by a great many people as an emotionally extraordinarily deep, committed and embedded 'horizontal comradeship'. Writing of the development and promulgation of Irish identity in Nineteenth century Ireland, Mac Laughlin offers some suggestion of the depth of identification and 'horizontal comradeship' some people within Ireland felt towards their sense of Nationhood:

As members of the nation were forged into an organic community they also developed deep, often spiritual, attachments to the country they inhabited... So there developed a collective memory, a collective vision of the future, as citizens of the nation developed a capacity to project themselves forward as a people of distinction, and with a distinct contribution to make (2001:130).

To Smith, comprehending the embedded-ness and the appeal of the Nation requires a greater understanding than suggested within Anderson's approach:

We need to understand nationalism as a type of collective conduct, based on the collective will of a moral community; and the shared emotions of a putatively ancestral community; and this means that we need to grasp the nation as a political form of the sacred community of citizens (2001:82).

In explaining the Nation Smith offers his own *Ethno-Symbolism* approach. When, for instance, Gellner views nationalism as the factor which, to some degree, ‘invents’ (1981:49) the Nation, Smith’s approach, as the title would suggest, is very much informed around historical ethnic markings developed through, and ingrained into, national identity. How we should negotiate the Nation then, for Smith (2001), is fundamentally through recognition that ethnic factors of identity can have a determining emotional effect upon national identity itself, such as in Ireland. What is an essential element for Smith (2001) in this approach, indeed something of a proposed advantage over other ways of negotiating the Nation, is how sociologically embedded this approach is when compared to such approaches as Anderson or Gellner.

With applying *Ethno-symbolism* to Irishness a concern is not so much that it fails to capture being Irish expressed under the traditional Gaelicist notions of Irishness but rather it may fail to capture Irishness as perhaps generally understood under contemporary conditions. Certainly there has been some appreciation how ethnic markings - Gaelicism and Catholicism - were ingrained within the construction of Irishness at one stage but the contemporary social conditions within Ireland, or the social conditions particularly from the period of 1960s modernisation, suggests that it is problematic, to say the least, for these markings to hold as determined an embrace over the construction and understanding of being Irish that they may have once held. Taking the example of Protestants, or rather those Protestants who chose to stay in the south after partition, Coakley (1998) views this grouping as moving from an ethnic minority in Ireland to a religious minority over the post-independent period. It is interesting that Coakley identifies three phases of Protestant migration from the territory of the Republic of Ireland - 1911-26, 1926-36 and 1936-46 - that obviously detrimentally affected the size of this population, going from over 10% of the population in 1911 to 5.7% in 1946, with these phases of migration pre-dating modernisation. What is also interesting, given the social accommodation of difference somewhat allowed through the modernisation process, is that between 1946-71 ‘the estimated Protestant emigration rate has been lower than the Catholic one’ (Coakley, 1998:91). Something must have changed in the construction of Irishness if an ethnic minority in pre-independent Ireland hostile to Irish self-determination - Coakley uses the late nineteenth century southern Protestant ‘Near-unanimous opposition to any measure of devolved government in Ireland’ (1998:101) as an indication of proof of political opposition - can possibly move from a distinctly marked ethnic identity to a religious minority. Emphasising this point, perhaps not



from the perspective of how Southern Protestants might see their Irish identity but from how non-Protestant may view Protestants, FitzGerald (2003) points out that Protestants in post-Independent maintained their 'favourable socio-economic position' (2003:150) and what suggests how subjective feelings can trump implied objective markings and indeed imply how being Irish is mutually understood is, as FitzGerald notes, that Protestant privileges 'have never been challenged; so far as I am aware they have never been publicly adverted to' (2003:151). No doubt certain Protestants' experiences in post-Independent Ireland were often mixed - forced migration or Fethard-on-Sea for instance - but it would be difficult to argue that on a general level of understanding contemporary Irishness, people approach southern Protestants as a distinct grouping with their own internal values radically dissimilar to Irishness.

Poole, essentially reflecting upon Anderson's imagined 'deep, horizontal comradeship' and following a point made by Miller, states that, 'Like other identities, a national identity provides us with a specific *moral* agenda' (2003:272). This national '*moral* agenda' establishes an obligation of assistance towards fellow nationals as against the requirements of non-nationals. In trying to understand this national commitment Poole highlights how, 'we need to recognise that the nation is not the only moral community which privileges mutual responsibilities between members over those from outside the group' (ibid). Individual membership of different - formal or informal - communities of identification establishes a particular commitment:

To be a member of a family, a group of friends, or even a university, for example, means that one has greater responsibilities to some than one has to others. To enter into certain kinds of human relationships simply *is* to acknowledge that the concerns of those who are also involved in those relationships will, in certain respects, take priority over the concerns of others (Poole, 2003:272-273).

Though we do have differing group membership - often changing and unstable - it is undeniable that national membership seems to remain a constant social fact that is socially privileged in how we understand and negotiate social relations. Though individuals do move in and out of particular relationships towards communities of identification the bonds established by the Nation look, and perhaps operate, more stably than other communities of identification. Gellner for instance, in a criticism raised by Anderson (1991), consistently seems adamant about the deceptiveness of national identity even though the Nation is an expression centred around how many people see themselves, and which can, importantly, dictate individual actions:

Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations (1991:6).

We see something of Gellner's attitude towards the Nation when he views its expression as 'false consciousness' (1983:124) therefore suggesting that there is some true consciousness to identity. Dismissing the bonded-ness demonstrable in both the *ideal* and *practice* of the Nation hardly encourages a full engagement with how the Nation can be operationalised. It is not a matter of 'true' communities' but far more a matter of *imagined communities*. Though Gellner may be right that the Nation 'suffers from pervasive false consciousness' (1983:124) this 'false consciousness', which he fully understands to be naturalised within social relations, has a power over identity that connects and bonds many individuals within a nationalised discourse.

In trying to appreciate the pull upon self-identity that the nation can evoke Poole positions this ability of self/collective identification as connected with the projection of an individual transcending the bordered limitations of their individuality:

Where it asks us to make sacrifices, even to the extent of giving up our lives for the sake of the nation, the voluntary act of renunciation exemplifies an identity which transcends the limitations of our own particular and limited concerns. Paradoxically, the greater the sacrifice, the more significant the values embodied in the nation. By its ability to demand sacrifices, the nation provides its members with a share in a life which transcends their own (2003:272).

Collectivist identities 'help people to feel located in the world' (Calhoun, 1997:86) but the intense felt-immediacy of national belonging does not necessarily express itself in other collectively shared expressed identities – like class or gender. National identity is not only differently composed from other collectivist identities but is experienced differently from other formatted collective identities. For example there can be a 'horizontal comradeship' attached to class and gender but nationalising this identity - so applying as commonly shared to all members of the nation - seems improbable as both gender and class are typically hierarchically expressed in how they are mobilised. Even though men may have once enjoyed the privilege of national identity - through formal citizenship for instance or through military service - that may have acted to exclude women from membership this certainly never excluded women from actively

constructing the Nation - instilling or mobilising national sentiment for instance - or from *women* - Cathleen Ni Houlihan for example - being employed in the construction of the Nation.

For Smith the subjective approach of Anderson and other modernists like Miller is too collectively encompassing as it can make 'it difficult to separate our nations from other kinds of collectivity such as regions, tribes, city-states and empires, which attract similar subjective attachments' (2001:11). Smith is correct in how a subjectivist approach could possibly see national identity as only separated by degrees from other particular collective identities but, not only do the contemporary social conditions of Ireland suggest that a subjective approach is the best means for understanding what the Irish nation, or more specifically Irish identity, may imply but a subjective approach can also allow us to move beyond the fixed demands of objective criteria and place how identity is constructed and negotiated as central matters of concern.

The above discussion has emphasised a particular bounded-ness to identity suggested by the Nation. Quite clearly understandings around the Nation are dependent upon collective differentiation but also a process correspondingly encouraging a sense of collective shared-ness. In the concluding section of this chapter we shall consider a challenge to this strict demarcation of national identity founded upon a collective differentiation and the common sharing of identity; that of individualisation.

## 2.2 Individualisation

There is a particular tension highlighted in the idea of the Nation that the individual interest - and even identity - is sub-servant to the collective interest and indeed collective identity. This is clearly seen in Calhoun's (1997) example of children informing on their parents for the sake of the Nation but it could also be said that some parents may in some respects similarly monitor their own - and perhaps other - children's behaviour when trying to socialise particular values of the Nation. For instance sending your child to an Irish speaking school in Northern Ireland is often regarded as a political statement of identity.

This tension between individual and collective identity, and indeed the prioritising of collective identity, is captured in George Russell's description of 'the highest civilizations':

In the highest civilizations the individual is raised above himself and made part of a greater life, which we may call the National Being. He enters into it, and it

becomes an oversoul to him, and gives to all his works a character and grandeur and a relation to his works of his fellow-citizens, so that all he does conspires with the labours of others for unity and magnificence of effect (1982:11).

Russell's 'highest civilizations' may well have a particularly implicit gendered understanding of *the people*, but it certainly has an explicit understanding that individual co-operation and integration within 'the National Being' allows for a national 'unity and magnificence of effect'. The individual, at least for Russell, seems a more realised entity under the condition of national mutuality than when this condition is absent.

The collective *National Being* has, in Ireland, been generally regarded as paramount to the individual being or interest, not only in Russell's philosophical discourse but also in practical social instances. Mac Laughlin writes of how nationalist rhetoric in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland insisted upon the relegation of 'feminists, workers and small farmers' concerns for the development and greater good of the Nation (2001:17). Rather obviously the direct institutionalisation of a Roman Catholic ethos in facets of state policy has an effect of limiting the expressions of non-Catholics in that part of Irish society controlled and influenced by the state. If however traditional notions of Irishness point towards an understanding of the Nation through generally conforming collective markers of identity - such as Catholic membership - then contemporary understandings of Irishness would seem to point far more towards an individualising, or certainly a less collectivising, understanding of the Nation.

When Jenkins (2004) can rightly juxtapose the conceptualisation of individual identity as emphasising difference and collective identity as emphasising similarity, the balance of contemporary Irish identities, for some people, leans far more towards an individualisation of identity than toward a collectivisation of identity. While Russell marks one particular factor influencing the inability to realise the National Being in Ireland - 'What really prevents an organic unity in Ireland is the economic individualism of our lives' (1982:172) - contemporarily we could go beyond 'the economic individualism of our lives' and suggest the simple 'individualism of our lives' preventing Russell's 'organic unity in Ireland'. This can be seen in how Waters (1995) regards social processes in Ireland, since modernisation, as forcing people to engage with their own identity on a very specific individual level that can lead away from any sense of substantive shared identity and social solidity. For Lodziak, and no doubt for Waters, there has been a social process 'launching individuals towards a privatistic existence' (1995:77).

This 'privatistic existence' or 'privatism' is related to how powerless people feel towards effecting or shaping collective agency and/or identity and how empowered individuals may feel in their own private realm:

Our lack of autonomy, that is our powerlessness, in the wider society leaves most individuals bereft of substantial meaning and satisfaction... it makes perfect sense to seek meaning and satisfaction in the private sphere (Lodziak, 1995:78).

For Lodziak heightened feelings of individuality might be related negatively to contemporary sociality but for other theorists heightened individuality is not necessarily a negative social development or related negatively to contemporary social conditions, but can be an individually empowering development placing the individual at the centre of their own identity construction.

Beck considers contemporary social processes as leading away from encompassing and demanding collective national identity towards an individual process of identity:

The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. The choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time... Any attempt to create a new sense of social cohesion has to start from the recognition that individualism, diversity and scepticism are written into Western culture (2000:165).

Beck moves Western society, and the Nation, beyond one where national identity can typically hold the imaginative ability to mobilise Anderson's 'deep, horizontal comradeship' or Smith's 'communities of emotion and will', into a social space now occupied by 'individual self-fulfilment' not necessarily attached to national self-fulfilment. It can certainly be understood, given the above consideration of the Nation, that such an individualising influence upon identity is a challenge to the collective identification of the Nation and for any mobilising articulation of the Nation that may suggest or imply restraining 'individual self-fulfilment'. Certainly for Lodziak the emphasis upon privatism 'is both a retreat into the public sphere, and a retreat into the self' (1995:79) and could certainly be seen as a departure from an active engagement with the social and certainly the Nation. However for Beck, and indeed Giddens, it is active engagement that now pervades our construction of self.

For Giddens and Beck modernity operationalised a radically different means of understanding individual's engagements within the social world:

Human action does not unfold as the result of programmed impulses. Rather, human beings reflexively monitor what they do as an intrinsic part of what it is that they do. Such monitoring is ordinarily not expressed discursively. It is carried on on the level of practical consciousness. It is nonetheless extraordinarily elaborate, and is a chronic feature of even the most trivial of human activities (Giddens, 1987:99).

This reflexive condition of modernity is continuous and adjusting:

The reflexivity of modern life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character (Giddens, 1991:38).

Giddens places individuals as active agents in developing their identity with the potential ability to alter behaviour if an outcome of an individual's reflexive project demands this. For Beck (2000) the collective bonding of industrial society - he cites ethnic and class consciousness but he could also have cited national consciousness as one of these general social processes, indeed its omission is puzzling given the significance nationalism has played and plays in western and non-western societies - have been displaced by a detraditionalisation of identity that affects how individuals engage in social processes. The sense of detraditionalisation is also a theme picked up by Bauman and how he configures contemporary identity. For Bauman it is not simply a detraditionalisation of the past and how this can affect behaviour, but also the present that affects identity:

In a world where disengagement is practiced as a common strategy of the power struggle and self-assertion, there are few if any firm points in life that can be safely predicted to last. The 'present' does not therefore bind the 'future', and there is nothing in the present that allows us to guess, let alone to visualize, the shape of things to come. Long-term thinking and, even more, long-term commitment and obligations indeed appear 'meaningless' (2004:68).

Bauman's suggestion that 'there are few if any firm points in life that can be safely predicted to last' can certainly be regarded as undermining the emotional force often employed around the concept of the Nation. Though modes of Irish or indeed general national meta-narratives can be argued to exist and impact upon identity - the United States socialising environment of *freedom*

*and democracy* for example - they exist, for Bauman, Beck or Giddens, in an environment substantially changed in manner from both the conditions of traditionalism and what might be termed early modernity. As Giddens writes, 'the signposts established by tradition now are blank' (1991:82) meaning we can create, re-embed or re-articulate our individual self with *notions of tradition* - the continued importance of Gaelicism for some people for instance - but a socially empowered, overlapping, conforming acceptance of traditions are not necessarily present in what Giddens terms 'the fact of living in a post-traditional order' (ibid). This quite obviously radically opens up different interpretations and meanings, which can be applied, not simply to individual identity but to what can be suggested of collective identity. People, for Beck, take a reflexively active approach to their identity – identity is not necessarily a given and preordained fixity - interpreting, re-articulating and expressing who they are:

Increasingly, everyone has to choose between different options, including as to which group or subculture one wants to be identified with (1992:88).

Giddens shares a similar understanding of identity creation under modernity:

Self-identity... is not something that is given, as a result of the continuities of the individual's action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (1991:52).

The particular substance of any established identity forming tradition has been removed and now identities are formed and re-formed around 'the reflexive activities of the individual' or what Hall terms the '*process of identification*' (1996:344).

Though we should understand that social relations might have become detraditionalised this does not imply that the traditional is not still an important factor of identity. We have already seen above how Giddens situates contemporary nationalism as the dis-embedding of traditional practice but also the attempted re-embedding of identity in a traditional practice: '*The significance of nationalism in the modern world is quite clearly related to the decline of tradition and to the fragmentary character of the everyday life in which lost tradition are partly refurbished*' (1987:178, italics added). Equally Beck identifies how contemporary modern social relations involve 'the invention of hybrid traditions' (2000:169). Giddens accepts that 'in many sectors of modern life traditional elements remain, although they are often fragmented and their hold over behaviour partial' (1991:206). For instance even though Ireland could be labelled secularist, people, in the main, still baptise their children, often encourage - or at least are not

generally resistant - their children to receive Confession and Communion, people still marry in Church and the majority of funerals are still carried out in a Church or under the auspicious of religious instruction. The celebration of these various religious obligations suggest that tradition remains but indeed the 'hold over behaviour' is partial as people continue to practice individualised understandings towards religion; non-attendance at mass or participate in practices/lifestyles which religious doctrine may label as *sinful* for instance.

Though Giddens, and indeed Beck, place modern social relations and practices as open to critical investigation Loyal (2003) critically challenges Giddens conceptualisation of individual reflexivity as embedded in modernity. For Loyal (2003), Giddens privileges the individual as free-floating - outside even the power of media influence in shaping or determining identity unlike others, such as Bauman, who sees the media as offering 'raw stuff' in how people can negotiate their identities (2004:97). Giddens is also accused of overplaying how unreflexive traditional societies may have been (Loyal, 2003). Loyal suggests that there is a modern Western-centric approach in Giddens work that fails to appreciate that:

Individuals do not alter patterns of actions away from traditional practice simply because of an abstract notion of 'heightened reflexivity'; rather, this shift in behaviour stems from the fact that human reflexivity is socially grounded or concretely embedded within determinate contexts of social/material interests. It is these interests which help to account for the struggles in the social world (2003:127).

Though there is an implicit liberal individualism underlining Giddens work, the attempt by Loyal to pull Giddens 'heightened reflexivity' into the 'determinate contexts of social/material interests' does not necessarily address what may be itself the practiced outcome of reflexive deliberation; the continuation or change of individual or social behaviour. Loyal accepts individual reflexivity, he just configures its practice differently, as more limited - in that it is impacted by socially defining power, such as the media - than Giddens would. However to suggest that Giddens does not see limitation in potential action would be unfair. Giddens accepts that 'reflexive attention' requires as a necessary condition 'the recognition of choice' and that this process is itself conditional upon 'an appraisal of one's limits and the constraints to which one is subject' (1992:91). Through this process one can determine what 'opportunities' are available to individual actions (ibid). The individual must be open to an ability, and indeed a



circumstance of choice before they can possibly be individually reflexively engaged in their situation and potentially evaluate their position and their potential 'opportunities'. Equally Giddens has written of how alternative sources and actions of identities exist but they can operate through defined limiting factors:

To speak of a multiplicity of choices is not to suppose that all choices are open to everyone, or that people take all decisions about options in full realisation of the range of feasible alternatives (1991:82).

For instance issues of ethnic, class or gender discrimination may make it impossible or difficult for the realisation of choice being 'open to everyone'. For instance a female Traveller child might list as a projected future career Clinical Physician, but institutional racism may severely limit a member of the Traveller community from becoming a Clinical Physician. We can see in this example both the drive of individuality but also how its realisation may be limited by established social relations. It is as Lodziak writes, 'first and foremost', that the ability for individual autonomy is controlled by both 'a function of the resources available to the individual' and well as 'the resources not available' (1995:58). Bauman also picks up this point on how our identities are sometimes constructed within limiting circumstances.

For Bauman (2004) there are two extremes to identity; one is the completely open and self-creative, which is available, for Bauman, only to a global elite who can choose and actively create their identity. At the other extreme of identity are those people who have an identity forced upon them, citing the diverse constituents of the 'underclass' as an example of a miscellaneous grouping that have identity imposed upon them. Choice then is not open to everyone and indeed for Bauman the majority of people reside somewhat in between these two extremes of identity:

Most of us are suspended uneasily between those two poles, never sure how long our freedom to choose what we desire and renounce what we resent will last, or whether we will be able to keep the position we currently enjoy for as long as we would find it comfortable and desirable to hold it. Most of the time the joy of selecting an exciting identity is adulterated by fear. We know after all that if our efforts fail because of a dearth of resources or lack of determination, another, uninvited and unwanted, identity may be struck over our chosen and self-assembled one (2004:38).

Bauman's limitation in identity construction is somewhat recognised by Giddens, and Loyal's charge that Giddens 'representation of individuals as free agents capable of choosing in relation to abstract knowledge' (2003:128) holds less force when compared to how Giddens recognises that individual actions can be limited, and so somewhat determined, 'by socioeconomic circumstances' (Giddens, 1991:82). Though there are limitations in Giddens - particularly as Loyal (2003) highlights his lack of engagement with the possible effects of mediaisation upon the construction of identity - there is the recognition of changed social circumstances that may pertain under contemporary social conditions as compared to other - *traditional* for instance - social conditions.

Both Beck and Giddens point towards the radical re-articulation of identity away from encompassing stable collective identity towards unstable, changing individual identities. Beck (1992) highlights a re-orientation of identity away from collective bonds towards individualised consideration:

The tendency is towards the emergence of individualized forms and conditions of existence, which compel people – for the sake of their own material survival – to make themselves the centre of their own planning and conduct of life (1992:88).

It is not only the displacement of tradition and the reality of alternative sources of identity formation but also the 'material survival' which induces individuals to be more involved in their own self-constructed identity in contemporary modern societies. How individual identity is actively engaged in constructing self-identity can be seen in how Beck views the open-ness of identity choice and action:

Those who live in this post-nation, global society are constantly engaged in discarding old classifications and formulating new ones. The hybrid identities and cultures that ensue are precisely the individuality which then determines social integration. In this way, identities emerge through intersection and combination, and thus through conflict with other identities (2000:169).

Though of course 'conflict with other identities' is itself 'written into' identity construction - there is always some necessary Other to whom we are as individuals or as a collective identity - Beck makes a distinction between contemporary social processes and historical social processes of identity. Where historically people had particular identity support mechanisms - citing 'corporate religious-cosmological certainties' but also of course nationalised bounded identities

or class identities - that could stabilise identity, contemporarily these assuring and locating identities are displaced and people 'are transplanted from the national industrial societies of the first modernity into the transnational turmoil of world-risk society' (ibid). The 'world-risk society' is composed of different and conflicting individual and collective identities which individuals precariously but actively negotiate. For Giddens the 'new individualism' implies that:

Social cohesion can't be guaranteed by the top-down action of the state or by appeal to tradition. We have to make our lives in a more active way than was true of previous generations, and we need more actively to accept responsibilities for the consequences of what we do and the lifestyles we adopt (1998:37).

Some element of active engagement is now the rule of identity, be it individual or collective. We have seen in Miller's understanding of the Nation that it is *Active in character* and this characterisation of the Nation now fits with how individualising processes are, in essence, *Active in character*. It is not only that 'Self-identity has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before' (Giddens, 1999:47) but national identity can also be seen as a field that 'has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before'. The *Ethno-symbolic* markings that were once firmly attached to Irishness, under traditional conditions, do not have a contemporary social power of self-sustainability they may have once held. However it is not simply that these *Ethno-symbolic* identity markings can be challenged. Fundamentally all identity markings can be challenged as individualisation is not only detraditionalisation it is also importantly 'the opposite' for Beck: '*a life lived in conflict between different cultures, the invention of hybrid traditions*' (2000:169, italics added). However, no matter how much Giddens or Beck may suggest we live in a post-national sociality, this does not necessarily mean that Anderson's imaginative project of the Nation stops. Though 'a deep, horizontal comradeship' suggested around specific national characterisations unquestionably appears challenged by the notion of any 'post-nation' sociality, national identities continue to be distinguishable 'by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson, 1991:6). For instance Beck highlights that 'The closed space of national politics no longer exists' (2000:173) but he cannot fundamentally challenge Miller's notion that nations are *Active in character*, as Beck writes that:

the public realm no longer has anything to do with collective decisions. It is a question not of solidarity or obligation but of conflictual coexistence (2000:169).

Even at best the public space may have been emptied of ‘collective decisions’ it has not been emptied of activity, though potentially changing from what Beck sees as ‘solidarity or obligation’ to one ‘of conflictual coexistence’ and/or hybridity.

Both Beck and Giddens would fall into the charge Smith makes against Anderson, that each fails to adequately understand the emotional pull of national identification. Certainly any suggestions that we live in a fundamentally post-national sociality emptied of national feelings would seem emphatically disproved by the continuing evidence of national conflicts. Even in Ireland increased levels of racism would suggest the continuation of some understanding of ‘categorical identities over relational ones’ (Calhoun, 1997:46) when some people do make racist claims grounded in promoting national claims. Indeed even though Giddens and Beck may each may have their own reflexive relationships towards identity construction this seems no reason to surmise that the overwhelming majority of people within any particular country may not have their own reflexive demands which might be decidedly collectivist and national in focus and intent. The Nation may have very little meaning and pull for professional well-paid academics but for Bauman’s ‘underclass’, or generally for people in Iran or Norway, the Nation may continue to hold immense significance.

Giddens and Beck share an understanding that an important feature of the Nation seems to continue into ‘second modernity’ (Beck, 2000:173); *the bounded-ness and embedded-ness of the state*, which is not only in Ireland but also globally, principally, the nation-state. The impact that states have had in creating national identity cannot be discounted and its importance was briefly touched upon above in considering Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. Gellner, who as we saw emphasised the idea that nationalism precedes the Nation, is in no doubt of the importance States have had in creating national identities. Particularly important for Gellner is the influence of schooling in formatting a national identity. The operationalisation of the Nation is seen as reliant upon a ‘generalized diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication’ (1983:57) that offers something around a feeling of shared common identity. Indeed Gellner positions ‘The monopoly of legitimate education’ as more important within the reproduction of power than one of Weber’s defining characteristics of the state, ‘the monopoly of legitimate violence’ (1983:34). The control over formal education is, for a social critic like Chomsky, about ‘indoctrination and for imposing obedience’ (2000:16). Though people may

dispute the socialising intent or effects of formal education it has to be accepted as playing some role in constructing a sense of national and self-identity. Indeed emphasising the shared role that formal education plays throughout the global - from Ireland to Iran or England to Jamaica - is the stress that formal education lays upon the ability to read and speak the dominant national language or languages.

Obviously states generally tightly control and supervise educational practice but the impact of the state in shaping identities can be found well beyond educational content. For instance the powerful coupling of the ideas of citizenship and nationality affords states the legal ability to define who belongs and who is excluded from the Nation. For instance the Irish Citizenship referendum of 2004 might not have removed a person's ability to identify themselves as Irish - which can still be regarded on a level of subjective self-identification - but on the level of conferring or limiting Irish citizenship the outcome can certainly be seen as severely limiting peoples' ability to be regarded, particularly by Irish citizens, as fellow Irish nationals sharing the same citizenship rights, because of course some do not. The commanding ability of the state in 'second modernity' to offer and shape identity is somewhat missed or dismissed by both Beck and Giddens.

Giddens (1999) takes a very limiting view of the state feeling the epoch of the nation-state has finished simply because states may pool sovereignty, as opposed to exclusively exercising it within fixed bounds, and that politicians simply do not have the ability to determine outcomes. However it was seen above when regarding how *The nation is imagined as sovereign* that it is not necessarily the ability to enforce sovereignty that may matter but, according to Calhoun, how we may think about these relationships that can continue to promote a nationalising environment. Though Beck, rightly, considers the legitimatisation of the state and established political institutions and actors as increasingly challenged he does not seem to see them as *not playing any significant role in society* but he is not explicit in their role as national identity creators or identity creators that can shape even a sense of self. Something of a colliding, conflicting sociality is judged to exist but how can such social relations not involve immense social power that could only have a dramatic effect upon identity? States *are* significant developers of identity, as are of course some politicians who may frame policy - for instance it was politicians that formally instigated and legitimised the Citizenship referendum in Ireland -

and simply because national sovereignty is diminished, or the role of politicians questioned, this need not necessarily affect whether the Nation continues to be visualised.

Boyce has written that 'Without some means of transmitting memory, every generation would forget the experiences of the one before' (2001:265). This obviously suggests that the social field is completely open to creation and that the Nation - which depends upon a historical sense of existence - is itself open to creation and re-creation. However Boyce also firmly locates what mechanism transmits memory and develops a connection with what went before and what may be suggested of the future, 'The state mediates these memories, encouraging some, discouraging or suppressing other' (ibid). Writing of the rift between historical revisionism and the established accounts of modern Irish history as one in which *the people* and *the Nation* may have emerged from British oppression, Boyce emphasises the role the state plays in developing identity:

But as many (though by no means all) historians watch with satisfaction the dissolution of the old, apparently solid ground of the grand narratives of Irish history (nationalist and Unionist), the state is obliged to stand between the two extremes: those of the fragmented past, which underlies its need for some agreed past that will help direct its future, and the necessity not to surrender to a narrative of the past that will interrupt or jeopardise its efforts to modernise itself (2001:265-266).

Boyce suggests the state is not identity neutral but must 'present a thematic past for commercial and political ends' (2001:266). The 'political ends' of course deal with the social reproduction of legitimacy but the 'commercial' ends point towards how fundamental commercial interests have become in Ireland, so much so that Boyce feels they have actually 'triumphed in the sponsorship of collective memory' (2001:267). Indeed something of how important commercial considerations are can be seen to operate in how St. Patrick's Day celebrations has been realigned away from a religious consciousness and celebration of Christianity arrival in Ireland to a more secularised focus upon a celebration of Irishness itself. The state has of course been a central actor in this realignment and for Boyce, the state is a central actor in the construction of identity:

For the Irish state, or any state, to survive, it is important to create a master narrative, to repeat the past consciously, to find significance to celebrated recurrence (2001:266).

Irrespective of the motive of the state regarding commercial consideration rather than explicit political considerations, the importance of the state in generating 'a master narrative' can be appreciated. The state explicitly attempts - through control of educational content for instance or legal censorship or financial supports - to sanction how particular memories are to be commemorated or even recalled and how indeed they should be recalled. The state sponsors particular symbolic occasions - many St Patrick's Day parades around the country, occasional 1916 commemorations or State funerals - emphasising and re-affirming notions of Irish identity. The power to determine bounded notions of Irishness can be seen in Foster's point that:

A dominant theme of Irish history in the last thirty years of the twentieth century has been the cementing of partitionism and the institutionalising of twenty-six-county nationalism (2007:99).

This shows not only how the Nation can be re-imagined but the powerful ability the state in conjunction with other socialising forces - like the media - has to affect identity and legitimise the sense that Irishness is essentially contained within the Republic of Ireland.

Beck may privilege the individual identity as 'radically non-identical life' (2000:171) but the state has a grounded, often, *radically identical life* which is not missed by Bauman:

Nation states promote 'nativism' and construe their subjects as 'natives'. They laud and enforce the ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural homogeneity. They are engaged in incessant propaganda of shared attitudes. They construct joint historical memories and do their best to discredit or suppress such stubborn memories as cannot be squeezed into shared memories. They preach the sense of common mission, common fate, common destiny (1990:154).

The requirements of 'a master narrative' - school curriculum, celebrated public holidays, the social rights of citizenship and the power to control, even define, national membership and non-membership - demands that the state make efforts to (re)produce a common identity suggesting some belonging-ness to the Nation. Billig's emphasis upon *Banal Nationalism*, and the role the state plays in underlining Banal Nationalism, highlights how thinking outside the notion of the nation is a challenge; 'One cannot step outside the world of nations, nor rid oneself of the

assumptions and common-sense habits which come from living within that world' (1995:36). Indeed the emphasis upon legitimate international relations grounded upon the notion of a nation-state can only act to reaffirm the existence of nation-states themselves as the legitimate actor in the national and international order.

Though Giddens and Beck may underestimate the controlling influence of the state and also the ability of the Nation to mobilise feelings of identifications, they do hit upon a particular social process - individualisation - that seems a prevalent current in contemporary Ireland. Though the issue of self-identity will be considered in further chapters it is important to emphasise that the suggested practice of reflexive individualisation presents itself as an important mechanism in how individuals negotiate their identity and importantly how it interacts with the way in which individuals continue to imagine the Nation.

## 2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how problematic a definition of the Nation can be. As Mac Laughlin notes the study of the Nation 'has perplexed its students' (2001:12). There is, as Puri highlights, something both 'specific and very abstract' in both personal and theoretical engagement with the Nation (2004:11). People understand some conceptualisation of the Nation - typically their own at least, be it a positive or negative conceptualisation - but it is an understanding towards the Nation engaged with on a certain level of individual abstraction and selection. There is of course involved in collective identification a very uneven process of individual identification, with some people imbuing the Nation as a highly valued and meaningful identity, while other people may be more selective or dismissive of any collective claims upon identity made by the Nation.

Anderson's *Imagined Communities* may well be how people generally seem to engage with the Nation. Certainly how people make reference to the Nation would seem to imply some acceptance that nations stand as culturally differentiated entities where one's own nation might have a power to stimulate some collective sense of cultural and social similarity. It is not simply the theoretical terrain, which is contested, but the practiced and felt actuality of national identity that can itself be a highly contested affair. The consideration of the Nation and individualisation highlighted how uneven engagement towards collective identity can be, where individuals may themselves attempt to privilege certain modes and meanings of their imagination over others.



Garvin (2004b), writing about the powerful split within Irish society engendered by the Treaty debate, gives life to the divisions the Nation can evoke when writing about how different members of the MacNeill and Hales families fought on different sides during the Civil War. Obviously what the Nation demanded could mean different things to different members of the MacNeill and Hayes families.

In attempting to understand the Nation it was shown that it cannot be defined around implied notions of objective marking. This approach unquestionably can miss expressions of national identification not contained within the assumed objectively marked national core. For example if Irish identity was solely determined by *Catholic*, how could Irish Catholics have voted a Jewish politician, Robert Briscoe, into the Irish Parliament, a Parliament ideologically empowered with representing *the people of Ireland*? Such apparent anomalies of the Nation are of course further proof, if any is needed, of how the Nation 'has perplexed its students'. Though Briscoe may not have received any high profile political post the fact of his election, and the election of fellow Irish Protestants, surely suggests something of the complexity of national identity even though, unquestionably, in Ireland the sense of the Nation was developed by a 'Gaelic nationalism fused with rural fundamentalism' so becoming 'a prominent feature of the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in Catholic nation-building Ireland' (Mac Laughlin, 2001:42).

Though we have seen some contestation of what is perhaps implied by the Nation, and certainly the theme of individualisation can question the centrality of the Nation as a source of significant identity, Puri's point 'that there is no single story of nationalism and its meaning' (2004:66) is quite evident. We have settled our understanding of the Nation essentially on Anderson and Miller's approach. This does not mean that either theorist may have established what the Nation is but rather it is felt that Anderson's constructionist and Miller's multi-layered definition allows space for the particular and diverse meanings of the Nation to develop from the practice itself of how people actually imagine the Nation.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

A necessary characterisation regarding any investigation into how young people in Dublin may receive, construct and negotiate Irish identity has to accept, at the very outset, that the area under investigation is both conflicted and contested, that young people have many diverse sources for identity construction and that they may hold radically different views towards Irish identity and feelings towards being Irish. Of necessity this research has to deal with generalised understandings of collective identity; an attempt to identify general processes and understandings young people espouse in negotiating Irish identity. As a result of the expected complexity in notions of identity it is then understood that identity is a multi-faceted phenomenon that could potentially involve many layers and levels. Therefore attempting to capture the complexity of meanings towards Irish identity is an inductive exercise. It was hoped explanations of identity would essentially evolve from empirical field research investigating how young people may receive and construct notions of Irishness. However the approach was, of course, somewhat informed and indeed fuelled by some general theories and concepts within sociological thought - modernisation, individualisation, social identity and the process and operationalisation of collective identity formation and, importantly, what may be historically understood by the Nation in an Irish context and what contemporary investments may be made within the notion of Irishness. Given that an inductive attitude was taken towards this project the methodological framework was designed to be compositionally both qualitative and quantitative in approach, so hoping to capture in greater detail information about identity.

The quantitative strategy employed was a questionnaire. This chapter will unpack the mechanics of the questionnaire explaining what I was attempting to uncover and explicate about identity. The questionnaire was intended to reflect a rather representative view of how Irishness can be negotiated by young people in Twenty-first century Dublin, in what is a changing city. People in Ireland, and particularly Dublin, have experienced dramatic social change over the past 10 years and how these social changes are generally affecting young peoples' sense of personal

and collective identification could, it was felt, be best initially ascertained quantitatively through the use of a questionnaire. It was expected that a questionnaire would show differing interpretations of Irishness expressed by young people and that the questionnaire format was ideal for allowing comparison - based on individuality, gender, class, school etc. - within and between young people on various understandings of identity. A section in the questionnaire dealt with symbolic representation of Irishness and how significant young people felt these to be and below I will spend some time unpacking the section on *Symbols of Irishness* as this presented the greatest potential to fix symbolic identification - through offering a listing of explicit *Symbols of Irishness* - and suggest what symbolic significance young people placed in selected symbols. Having considered the questionnaire I shall then move on and briefly consider the SPSS inputting of the data.

The central qualitative element within this project involved interviews conducted in the form of focus groups. The primary reason for using focus group interviewing is outlined by Bell:

[T]he interview can yield rich material and can often put the flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses. (1999:135)

The questionnaire did supply details that explicitly pointed towards individual understandings of the issues of both self and collective identity and the focus groups were designed to further investigate identification for young people. This chapter will explain the approach taken towards focus groups and explain the dynamic I was attempting to capture within the focus groups. Much care was taken in the design, implementation and use of the qualitative and quantitative strategies and as such each approach shall be dealt with in separate detail below.

Though I have to respect the confidentiality of every person who participated in this project and every school, I will begin this chapter by considering the different schools that participated in this research. I will offer a brief introduction about the schools and suggest something of the ethos within each school and then consider some initial restraints on gaining access to young people.

### **3.1 Schools involved in the Research**

The site of the research was intended to be the general geographical area of Dublin south central. The reason for prioritising the south central area was completely logistical - it is the general area

of Dublin in which I grew up and it is an area of Dublin in which I then lived. The contacting of schools to assist in this project began when the questionnaire was in the second drafting of the design phase. I rang schools within the south central area and initially inquired about the Principal's name and if the school offered a Transition Year programme. The reason for targeting Transition Year students related to the fact that Transition Year is designed by most schools to be an experience beyond the constraints of formal education, as a year of self-discovery and/or individual exploration so I was hoping a research request would be more likely accommodated with a Transition Year than with any other year. Thirty separate schools were contacted by post - a separate mailing for the school Principal and Transition Year teacher(s), or teachers of Civic, Social and Political Education teachers where no Transition Year was available. In my letter of introduction to the schools, which also included a sample of the questionnaire (Appendix 1), I introduced the topic for discussion and highlighted how it could be beneficial for the students to engage in a reflexive exercise questioning identity. The schools approached showed a good general representative mix of social factors; public and private schools, co-educational and single sex schools, different religions ethos schools and schools of varying sizes were all selected to be surveyed.

The responses for assistance from schools varied. Only two middle class schools in the general Dublin south central area - out of well over ten that were sent a letter of introduction and followed up by, sometimes repeated, telephone enquires - agreed to distribute the questionnaire. Due to this lack of assistance I had to seek middle class schools outside the general south-central area to participate. I broadened the catchment area in such a way as to be still concentrated on the Southside of the city but encompassing areas further out from the south-central area. This broadening of the catchment area saw two additional middle-class schools agree to participate in returning questionnaires. Regarding questionnaire assistance from working class schools twenty schools were approached and I faced very little difficulty in getting agreement from six schools. I felt that a return of six schools in the research area I hoped to concentrate the research in was sufficient as a representative sample from this area.

Even though I had received a limited response from nearly all middle-class schools approached within the core Dublin south-central area in assisting with the distribution of the questionnaire, I understood that some schools were unable to help due to limited availability of time and that they may look more positively upon focus groups. In arranging focus groups I once

again mailed all schools in this area, both working class and middle class, a posting which contained a report on the questionnaire titled *Questioning Irishness Report 1 2004* (Appendix 2) and also a proposed list of questions to ask during focus groups (Appendix 3). The report *Questioning Irishness Report 1 2004* was designed particularly to give the schools that assisted with the questionnaires some feedback of the results and indeed when this project is completed I shall also be writing *Questioning Irishness Report 2* which shall give all the schools that participated in this research some overview of the research findings. This mailing was then followed up with at least one phone call where I again spoke to most Principals and all teachers of each respective middle class school seeking assistance in the establishment of focus groups. However once again the overwhelming response from middle class schools was reluctance to assist in the research. When schools had seen the questionnaire and could indeed both react to and monitor its content, I had an impression that the issue of what may be raised during a focus group - unmonitored and confidential - could prove highly sensitive and might prove damaging to the school itself. For instance on a number of occasions both teachers and principals asked me if the research was explicitly concerned with *race* or *racism*. I told each school representative that it was about Irish identity but if *race* or *racism* was a factor of consideration for some young people then it might be interrogated further. My strong impression was that some teachers and principals seemed to be extremely reluctant to allow their students an opportunity to be in an environment that might allow the questioning of *race*.

When I approached working class schools for assistance in arranging focus groups I found, not necessarily an unwillingness to help but rather an inability to help with arranging focus groups. Some teachers, and indeed one Principal, were more than willing to give assistance but they could not get the approval of the various Principals, and in the case of the Principal he could not get the assistance of the teacher, to authorise and arrange a fixed date for any possible focus groups. An important factor constraining the assistance of working class schools was that some schools simply did not have the available time to organise any focus groups - there was no Transition Year for instance in some schools and the difficulty of getting 2 or 3 groups from each school meant that major time-tabling issues had to be resolved. Because of this limitation in organising focus groups in working class schools in the core south-central area, the catchment area was extended. This extension allowed for some working class focus group representation,

however both schools were on the Northside of the city and indeed one was in a rapidly developing commuter area, which although in Dublin, could be considered outer-suburbia.

In total fifteen schools form the basis of this research. To respect the confidentiality of each school, names are not disclosed. Instead each school shall be designated by a capital letter followed by a number. Three capital letters will be used - A, B and C - and this categorisation signifies both the geographical location of the school and the class of the school. The number simply represents each school concerned. The A's are middle-class schools located in firmly middle class environs. As such if schools had of been located in Castleknock or Foxrock they would fall into the A category. B schools are working class schools located in somewhat mixed class environs, such as Inchicore, which has a mixed residential profile, though schools in this area would have working class profiles. The C's are working class schools located in firmly working class environs, such as if any schools from Neilstown or Hartstown had of participated they would have fallen into the C grouping. Below is a class, gender and religious profile breakdown for each school along with details of school participation in either questionnaires or focus groups:

***Table 3.1 - Breakdown of Schools' profile that participated in the research***

Name of School	Type of School	Class of School	Religious Ethos	Participated in Questionnaires	Participated in focus groups
A1	Male	Middle	Roman Catholic	No	Yes
A2	Mixed	Middle	Protestant	Yes	No
A3	Mixed	Middle	Multi-domination	Yes	Yes
A4	Female	Middle	Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes
A5	Mixed	Middle	Protestant	Yes	No
B1	Mixed	Working	Inter-domination	Yes	No
B2	Mixed	Working	Inter-domination	No	Yes
C1	Female	Working	Inter-domination	No	Yes
C2	Female	Working	Roman Catholic	Yes	No
C3	Male	Working	Roman Catholic	Yes	No
C4	Female	Working	Roman Catholic	Yes	No
C5	Mixed	Working	Inter-domination	Yes	No
C6	Mixed	Working	Roman Catholic	Yes	No
C7	Female	Working	Roman Catholic	Yes	No
C8	Female	Working	Roman Catholic	Yes	No

Of the schools twelve provided questionnaire responses - A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7 and C8 - and five provided focus groups - A1, A3, A4, B2 and C1. Below is a table breaking-down each Schools level of participation in either questionnaire returns or in focus groups:

***Table 3.2 - Schools rate of participation in questionnaire returns and/or focus groups***

Name Of School	Questionnaire Returns and sequence in SPSS date-set	Focus Group details
A1 School	No	Group 1 - 8 participants Group 2 - 8 participants
A2 School	31 Respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 1-30)	No
A3 School	19 Respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 60-78)	Group 1 - 6 participants (3 male and 3 female) Group 2 - 6 participants (4 male and 2 female) Group 3 - 7 participants (4 female and 3 male).
A4 School	22 Respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 120-141)	Group 1 - 7 participants Group 2 - 7 participants
A5 School	21 Respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 142-162)	No
B1 School	105 Respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 163-266)	No
B2 School	No	Group 1 - 7 participants (all male) Group 2 - 5 participants (3 male and 2 female)
C1 School	No	Group 1 - 6 participants Group 2 - 7 participants
C2 School	17 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 31-48)	No
C3 School	11 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 49-59)	No
C4 School	32 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 70-110)	No
C5 School	9 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 111-119)	No
C6 School	20 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 267-286)	No

C7 School	26 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 287-312)	No
C8 School	41 respondents (SPSS Questionnaires 313-352)	No

The full questionnaire compositional breakdown is as follows:

Number of questionnaire respondents: N=352

Gender: male 46.3% (N=163) and female 53.7% (N=189)

Class: working class 73.6% (N=259) and middle class 26.4% (N=93)

Age: fourteen 2% (N=7), fifteen 43.4% (N=153), sixteen 46.6% (N=164), seventeen 6.5% (N=23) and eighteen .3% (N=1)

There is some class and gender imbalance - indeed B1 School supplied over one-quarter of questionnaire responses - but it was felt that this would not in any dramatic way alter the qualitative element within this research. Irishness was approached as a general identity and I did not want to pre-empt any views towards Irishness.

Regarding the focus groups it can be seen that 74 people in total participated. There was almost an equal gender representation, with 36 male and 38 female, but it is notable that there is a class imbalance with 49 people being middle class compared to 25 working class participants. Though I feel no great hesitation about the number of B1 responses in the questionnaire findings it would have been better to include more schools from the C category in focus groups as not one of the schools that participated in helping complete the questionnaire could assist me in the request for focus groups. Though repeated efforts were made to gain the assistance of schools in the C category unfortunately nothing could be secured. Unfortunately also 3 other schools where I thought assistance might have been forthcoming in supplying focus groups also failed to materialise. I mention these schools because the inclusion of two of the three schools would have added, I feel, significant substance to the research. Though their inclusion might not necessarily have added greatly to the representative composition of the sample, they would have most importantly added to the diversity of the findings. These three schools were an Anglican all-girls school; a school for Travellers; and a Gaelscoil. As A5 above was an Anglican school the missed opportunity for focus groups in this school was not necessarily regretted but the inclusion of either a Gaelscoil or a school exclusively for young Travellers - though it is completely accepted



that each grouping only represents a very tiny fraction of the overall schooled body in Dublin - would have surely added to how Irishness can be viewed in the specific context of an ethnic grouping in Ireland and from a grouping taught through the medium of a highly specific national marking. Unfortunately the assistance hoped for from these schools never materialised due to student commitments but on a general level the sample can still be seen as encompassing some diversity, therefore lending to the sample's representativeness.

Having briefly introduced the schools that assisted in this research I will now turn my attention to the different research strategies employed, examining first the quantitative strategy.

## **3.2 Quantitative Strategy**

The rationale for utilising a questionnaire was based upon certain reasons, which would enable, it was hoped, key themes of identity to be investigated. There are four principle reasons why a questionnaire format was decided upon as the most suitable initial method for collecting data on young peoples' understandings of Irishness:

1. The way in which the research plan was envisioned;
2. The broad and encompassing general overview of the phenomenon of Irish identification a questionnaire could permit;
3. The accessibility to the research cohort and the reach a questionnaire offered for the representativeness of young people;
4. The comparisons between young peoples' identification - class, gender, attitudinal - a questionnaire could allow and the potential similarities and differences in identity it could show.

The first reason concerns how the research plan was itself designed. The questionnaire was to be the first of two stages of field research. The questionnaire would help form the basis and establish some of the most fundamental general aspects of how young people in Dublin negotiate and reflect upon what may be implied within Irish identity. Following the inductive approach a questionnaire format would allow identifications to be somewhat revealed through the quantitative analysis. The responses elicited from the questionnaire, both the symbolic identifications and the personalised comments were to act as the basis for further investigation in the following stage of the field research.

Secondly a questionnaire permitted a broad and encompassing overview of the phenomenon of Irish identification for young people to be collated. Considering the uneven and multi-faceted characterisation of collective identity it is important that some overlapping similarities and differences of identification could be acknowledged and potentially probed further at the qualitative stage of the research, so considering both *how identity could be shared* but also *how identity could differ*. The questionnaire was designed to supply a rather general sense of young peoples' understanding towards Irish identity.

There was some expectation that there would be a broad and diverse engagement with Irish identity evident within young peoples' realms of identification; that there would not, as such, be any expected 'single criterion that forms the focus of commonality' (Giddens, 1987:172). There was an assumption that as identification is uneven there would be *no* universally and evenly shared core accepted understanding towards Irish identity, rather there could possibly be themes of Irish identity that enjoyed some popularity amongst young people. Being mindful of the expectant diversity in how young people may negotiate Irishness the questionnaire format offered both the opportunity to question young people on specifically fixed notions of Irishness but also offer some open-ended questions which requested comments which could articulate features of identity which people attached to their own sense of Irishness. The questionnaire would provide a quantitative sense of both collective similarity and difference and would also importantly allow some expression of how individual identity connects or disconnects with collective identity.

Thirdly, both aware of the difficulties in gaining access to a large number of young people and mindful of maintaining a level of attention from young people in completing the questionnaire, it was felt that the questionnaire format offered not only some opportunity in canvassing the views of a large number of young people but would also illicit some support from the gate-keepers of this target cohort. Secondary schools are constantly bombarded with requests to assist in research projects and the easiest way to facilitate the time constraints and other competitive demands for research assistance is offered through a questionnaire format. A questionnaire could be delivered, if desired, to the students at the discretion of their various teachers, making a request for assistance more flexible and amenable to potential gatekeepers' concerns of time. The use of a questionnaire would also allow a wide-ranging dispersal of the questionnaire to different schools as it could be administered by individual teachers. The concern

shown towards potential gatekeepers was repeated in the concern shown towards students. Because of the complex characterisation of national identity a questionnaire was felt to be the best introductory approach to establishing generalised collective identifications and engage young people in a manner where they could be at ease with the issue of Irish identity in an honest and open way. The questionnaire was confidential - students were not asked their names - and it was to be completed individually which would allow for personal expressions of identity. This mixture of opened and closed questions was designed to maintain a level of interest and engagement from young people throughout the questionnaire.

The fourth and final reasoning for the questionnaire format relates to not only its ability to capture 'a snapshot of how things are at the specific time at which the data are collected' (Denscombe, 1998:6) but also in allowing a comparison to be captured within and between young people in the sample. Though one can fully accept Giddens (1987) position on the difficulty of highlighting a completed and shared understanding of the Nation, the questionnaire was in part a uniformed attempt to ascertain certain values and attitudes from a diverse range of young people in Dublin. The use of a questionnaire meant that not only could the exact same questions be asked of all young people participating in the research but also that a relatively large number of young people could be reached through this format.

Accepting that the questionnaire was the most appropriate initial method for investigating the views of young people towards Irishness, the next stage within the research project involved the actual design and distribution of the questionnaire itself. The following section looks in greater detail at the questionnaire design and at what was hoped to be discovered about identity from young people's responses.

### **3.3 Questionnaire Design**

After completing three separate drafts, the questionnaire was finalised for pilot testing. The questionnaire finally comprised of 26 questions spread over 8 pages. The time estimated to complete the questionnaire ranged from between twenty minutes to thirty minutes. It was important to limit the completion time of the questionnaire to between twenty and no more than thirty minutes as it facilitated its distribution within students' class times. The questionnaire was pilot tested with C8 School. With this pilot study I distributed and talked the students through the

questionnaire asking that they raise any technical areas of confusion with the layout of the questionnaire or anything confusing in how the questions were asked or with the language used. The pilot study highlighted only one area that required technical re-adjustment. Feedback from the pilot study focused on the table *Symbols of Irishness* which was then amended to have a clear space between *Symbols of Irishness For Other People* and *For Me* so that it would be clearer to understand the separation of tasks to be addressed. Another point highlighted from the pilot study regarded, more fundamentally, the problematic nature of symbolic associations and representations.

The questions raised most commonly during the pilot study related to specific *Symbols of Irishness* listed on the questionnaire. Requests were made by a number of people to further explain what *Repression* and *Intolerance* implied. It was obvious from the piloting experience that some symbolic terminology could be open to widely differing interpretations from students if assisting commentary was not offered, particularly a commentary unpacking abstract concepts such as *Repression* and *Intolerance*. However even though young people problematically engaged with these two *Symbols of Irishness* it was decided to retain these symbols in the main questionnaire despite their difficulties. Though *Repression* and *Intolerance* are not emphasised in the analysis - they are too problematic to draw conclusive inferences from - they were retained because they may have implied something negative about Irish identification so potentially stimulating some level of criticality. Students did not raise any other questions about the remaining *Symbols of Irishness*, thus inferring that these have a more comprehensive meaning, nor did students raise any other questions about the tasks requested so it was felt, from the feedback, that young people could comprehend the questions asked.

I will now go on and consider in more detail the questionnaire under its four component sections of:

Section 1 *Family*

Section 2 *Friendship networks*

Section 3 *Symbolisms*

Section 4 *General Questions*

### ***3.3.1 Family***

This section contained 10 subdivided questions that in total requested potentially 22 answers. The questions in this section were a combination of generalised questions and questions that potentially explored, and hoped to uncover, something of the factors at hand for young people in constructing their identity. This section ascertained the gender, age, residential location, student's county of birth and immediate family members, if family members had or do live outside Ireland, if the students wished to ever live outside Ireland and the employment outside the home of immediate family members and the student. On one level this section would deliver a general overview of familial backgrounds and give some necessary impression of the sample profile. Some of these questions are both formulaic and fundamental to most research projects - gender, age, class (determined through both the cultural capital attributed to the school and reinforced by the residential location of young people) - and are generally a necessary requirement for most research work. However other questions went beyond these standard profile questions to probe the internationalisation of young people in Dublin - for instance questions 7a to 9c (10 questions in total) were designed to probe immediate and extended international family networks and to question any desires and/or reasoning for young people to want to travel outside of Ireland.

### ***3.3.2 Friendship Networks***

This was the shortest section within the questionnaire comprising four sub-divided questions that potentially offered 8 responses. This section was intended to supply general information on how young people socialise, whom they may socialise with and if their amenability towards socialising may be limited by certain attitudes. Due to the increase in schooling outside the local area, there was a concern to investigate if young people socialised more so through school networks or through local networks. There was also a concern with identifying the numbers of people that young people suggested were in their core group of friends. However the main impetus of these *Friendship Networks* questions was concerned with addressing recent demographic changes, in the main brought about through immigration, that have occurred in Dublin and assessing their impact upon young peoples' friendship networks. As well as the above questions looking at fixed friendship relationships some questions also directly addressed

the issue of social inclusion/exclusion and social avoidance/acceptance. Two questions in this section were given over to ascertaining the friendship networks of young people with regard to having friends or friends' parents who were not born in Ireland. Through asking such a direct question about friendship networks it was hoped that a definite exposure to other cultural identities could perhaps illuminate other attitudes that young people may hold - for instance if young people expressed racist or anti-racist views did this connect in any way to having friends or having friends' parents not born in Ireland. Also asked were two questions that directly addressed the issue of social avoidance, namely if the respondent would avoid forming friendships either with people not born in Ireland or people from an ethnic minority. Analysing responses to this question of social avoidance and its connection to having a friendship network that may have included or excluded people not born in Ireland was hoped to give some general quantitative impression of the sample's concrete social networks and their willingness to potentially form friendships.

### **3.3.3. Symbolism**

Because of the potential difficulty presented by direct requests to articulate any meaningful constituents of a national identity it was felt that offering young people a listing of specific symbolic associations with Irishness would assist young people in concentrating, ordering and attempting to simplify any constituents of identification. Along with the attempt to simplify identification this section of the questionnaire was also approached with an attitude that symbolic representations of Irishness can act to condense and symbolically codify the difficulty in expressing the associations people may make towards a sense of Irishness. The issue of how practiced certain symbolic characterisations of identity was - for instance if a person highlighted the *GAA* or the *Irish language* as symbolically very important - could be taken further in the questionnaire where young people could highlight media and music consumption and list leisure activities. Offering young people the space to list such things as media consumption or list a role model could then be compared against how young people symbolically valued Irish identity; did for instance symbolically valuing *U2* follow on to list Bono as a role model, or symbolically valuing the *speaking the Irish language* express itself in young people listing TG4 as watched?

The introduction to this Section of the questionnaire was hoped to clearly highlight the task requested:

People very often rely on symbols in trying to sum up the difficult question of what is national identity. In this section you are offered a listing of symbols that some people might think and feel are important in expressing something about Irishness. You are asked to identify particular symbols you think ***OTHER PEOPLE*** – your family, friends, Irish or non-Irish people etc. - might regard as a very important, important or not important characteristic of Irishness. You are also asked ***WHAT YOU*** generally regard as an important, not important or very important symbol that expresses something Irish for you personally.

It was accepted from the outset that the *Symbols of Irishness* Section could not necessarily regulate the unevenness of identification across a diverse sample as symbolic interpretations cannot be read as uniformly fixed in meaning (Jenkins, 2004), as found with how the pilot study groupings engaged in the symbolic characterisations of *Intolerance* and *Repression*. It was also understood that the subjective element of the choices on offer - young people having to mark symbolic association as *Very Important*, *Important* or *Not Important* – could not fully respect how individual students differed subjectively over their valuations. However it was hoped that this Section would supply significant general information on the valuation young people hold towards particular *Symbols of Irishness*.

A full page of the questionnaire - listing 27 *Symbols of Irishness* in total and the option of including other symbols that a young person may themselves consider valuable - was given over to the consideration of *Symbols of Irishness*. With the exception of some space offered for individual comments on the subject of expressing Irish identity, this *Symbolism* section was felt to contain the greatest ability to generalise, in a quantitative way, a sensing of Irishness identifiable within the research cohort. The *Symbols of Irishness* section was expected to be the most challenging area within the questionnaire both for young people to address and for the researcher to evaluate. The first challenge is of course to decide what symbols to include for analysis.

### ***3.3.3.1 Deciding on what symbols to include in the questionnaire***

In approaching the consideration of what *Symbols of Irishness* to select on the questionnaire it was felt that though authors like Fennell (1993) may claim that what is symbolically valued in contemporary Ireland concerning *being Irish* is essentially emotionally vacuous, such viewpoints

should not pre-empt - or then imply - that young people only invest some type of emotional vacuous-ness in their own self or collective identification. Though Fennell is correct on the modernising challenge upon the 'image' of Irishness this does not immediately demand there is then no felt substantive 'image' of Ireland understood and expressible for young people. There may still be substance in Irish identification - emotional uniting bonds - just not made of the substance that authors like Fennell propose grounding Irishness in.

Symbolic identification is a highly complex phenomenon and a great deal of consideration was given to both the selection of symbols and how to present these symbols. Accepting that different symbols could be received differently by young people it was felt that the symbols to be addressed should be presented as simplistically as was possible. Though this minimal presentation could not address how each student received each symbol - unless this could be countered by administering all the questionnaires personally and offering a commentary as students addressed each symbol, which would prove completely unfeasible as I rightly assumed some schools would only agree to assist in distributing the questionnaire if it was at the teachers discretion - it would help to focus in a direct manner the understanding of symbolic association.

Below is a Table listing the *Symbols of Irishness* posed and the order in which they were listed, also included is how I expected people to read each symbol towards Irishness:



**Table 3.3 - Symbols of Irishness and valency**

Symbols of Irishness	Valency for Young People	Valency for the Generalised Other	Percent of Young people who addressed the question of personal identification	Percent of Young people who addressed the question of Generalised Other identification
<i>GAA</i>	Positive	Positive	96.3% (N=339)	95.2% (N=335)
<i>Irish soccer team</i>	Positive	Positive	96% (N=338)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>U2</i>	Positive	Positive	93.2% (N=328)	91.8% (N=323)
<i>Classic Irish literature (e.g. Joyce)</i>	Neutral-Positive	Positive	94.3% (N=332)	94% (N=331)
<i>Celtic Tiger</i>	Neutral-Positive	Positive	94.9% (N=334)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>Multiculturalism</i>	Neutral-Positive	Negative	93.5% (N=329)	92.6% (N=326)
<i>Alcoholic abuse</i>	Negative	Negative	96% (N=338)	95.2% (N=335)
<i>Welcoming to strangers</i>	Positive	Positive	95.7% (N=337)	94.6% (N=333)
<i>Irish language</i>	Neutral-Positive	Positive	96.3% (N=339)	95.2% (N=335)
<i>The craic</i>	Positive	Positive	95.2% (N=335)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>Intolerance</i>	Negative	Negative	92.3% (N=325)	91.5% (N=322)
<i>Repression</i>	Negative	Negative	88.9% (N=313)	87.5% (N=308)
<i>Speaking the Irish language</i>	Neutral-Negative	Positive	95.5% (N=336)	95.2% (N=335)
<i>Violent</i>	Negative	Negative	94% (N=331)	94.9% (N=334)
<i>The government</i>	Negative	Negative	95.5% (N=336)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>Political corruption</i>	Negative	Negative	92.9% (N=327)	94.3% (N=332)
<i>Learning/understanding Irish history</i>	Positive	Positive	95.5% (N=336)	95.2% (N=335)
<i>Irish folk music</i>	Neutral-Negative	Positive	95.5% (N=336)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>Friendliness/helpful.</i>	Positive	Positive	94.9% (N=334)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>Riverdance</i>	Neutral-Negative	Positive	94.6% (N=333)	94.9% (N=334)
<i>Catholic Church</i>	Neutral-Negative	Positive	96% (N=338)	96.3% (N=339)
<i>Spirituality - or beliefs in god,</i>	Positive	Positive	95.2% (N=335)	95.5% (N=336)
<i>Physically/geographically mobile</i>	Neutral	Positive	90.9% (N=320)	91.8% (N=323)
<i>Well education</i>	Positive	Positive	95.5% (N=336)	94.6% (N=333)
<i>Creative, artistic and talented</i>	Positive	Positive	95.2% (N=335)	95% (N=334)
<i>Socially co-operative and helpful</i>	Positive	Positive	93.8% (N=330)	94.9% (N=334)
<i>Saint Patrick's Day</i>	Positive	Positive	95.7% (N=337)	95.2% (N=335)

The listing intended to highlight a mixture of symbols that have a long established association with Irishness - *GAA, Welcoming to strangers, Irish language* - with symbols that have a more contemporary application - *Irish soccer team, U2, Celtic Tiger*. Some values were designed to be read as negative towards Irish identification - *Intolerance, Repression* and *Political corruption* for instance - while other values were designed to be read as positive factors towards identification - such as *The craic, Friendliness/helpfulness* and *Creative, artistic and talented*. The listed *Symbols of Irishness* was of course in no way exhaustive; what about *The Spire, Croke Park, Tradition, 1916 Rebellion, Northern Ireland, United Ireland, Leprechauns, Money, Irish Anthem, Irish Flag, IRA, Lazy, Neutrality, Rural Ireland, Shopping and consuming, Confirmation or Communion, Racists, Workaholics, Community or Pride*? On reflection however two things are noteworthy about what was offered; some *Symbols of Irishness* were listed far too broadly and loosely to give a reading that could suggest a given common meaning and the omission and inclusion of some symbols was a definite mistake.

Taking the first point it can be seen from the listing of *Symbols of Irishness* that some symbols are relatively unproblematic - *GAA, Irish soccer team, U2, Irish language, Catholic Church* - and identify something that can possibly be commonly understood. However the presentation of other *Symbols of Irishness* is far more problematic. For instance the symbol of *Violent* was included as a concern with how young people may project a Generalised Other and particularly how views towards Irishness may be impacted by the vista of the Troubles or the association of Irish people with violence. This approach was far too abstract to connect with how young people may symbolically interpret *Violent* and its inclusion was wasteful when another symbol could have been included, such as the *Irish Anthem* or *Irish Flag* for instance. Equally the notion of *Physically/geographically mobile* was included to garner how young people may interact with both the notion of the Irish Diaspora but also how they themselves may see Irish identity as mobile and not necessarily bounded to Ireland. Again this was far too abstract to expect an engagement that could be read as anything but highly problematic.

On the second point, on how the omission and inclusion of some symbols was felt to be a mistake, the consideration of *Intolerance, Repression, Violent* and *Physically/geographically mobile* should hopefully have highlighted how their inclusion was a mistake and took away from listing perhaps less problematical *Symbols of Irishness*. However what may have been more telling is the omission of any explicit reference to the National Question - such as *United Ireland*

or *Irish Unification*. Mac Gréil points out how from partition the position of Northern Ireland has ‘occupied a central place in attitudes and concerns of most Irish citizens’ (1997:224). This ‘central place’ can be seen in Mac Gréil own research findings where people in Dublin expressed overwhelming support for both Irish unification - 84% of people supported ‘A thirty-two County Republic with one central Government’ (1997:246) - and opposition toward the suggestion of rejoining the Union - 92% of respondents opposed the notion of ‘The whole island of Ireland to be part of the United Kingdom again’ (ibid). The mistake of omitting some symbolic representation of the National Question is felt to be limiting as it may have directly addressed how bounded/unbounded young people in Dublin feel Irish identity is. This could have been symbolically addressed if such a symbol, like a *United Ireland*, was seen to be significantly valued within the symbolic consciousness of young people and placing a symbol related to the National Question would certainly have positioned in the consciousness of young people the idea that this - a *United Ireland* - is perhaps one way people can and do negotiate Irishness.

It is not that consideration was not given to the inclusion of such symbols. It was felt that as there was more than adequate space in the questionnaire for students to articulate what they may have valued in Irish identity - either symbolically or practically - and if the National Question was within some young peoples’ national consciousness then they could still express their feelings either through the category of *Other* within the *Symbols of Irishness* or indeed elsewhere on the questionnaire and some, though admittedly only a very small number of the overall sample, did express opinions on Northern Ireland. After careful consideration it was decided not to include any direct reference to the National Question and it is particularly with hind-sight - particularly with how Northern Ireland and the northern Irish were tackled within the focus groups - that a symbolic reference to the National Question can be seen as valuable for illuminating more fully young peoples’ symbolic understandings towards Irishness. Along with these two limitations in the *Symbols of Irishness* presented to young people another problematic point relates to the request to estimate evaluations for a Generalised Other.

### ***3.3.3.2 Framing and evaluating other peoples symbolic notions of Irishness***

This category of *OTHER PEOPLE* was drawn extremely broadly - ‘your family, friends, Irish or non-Irish’ - with the intention of highlighting the values individuals projected and placed upon the totality of various social influences. It is rather obvious that any attempts at representing the

totality of various influences impacting upon the students socialisation environments, given the variety of identity sources and identity conflicts and how these may be negotiated within contemporary identity, is highly challenging. However the issue of the need to address a Generalised Other could not be dismissed. For Berger and Luckmann the dynamic relationship between an individual and the Generalised Other is what allows 'the subjective establishment of a coherent and continuous identity' whereby individuals comprehend 'not only with concrete others [like immediate family members] but with a generality of others' (1966:153). Attempting to comprehend Irish identity is tied to capturing the perception of social relationships beyond individual self-evaluations. Though Berger and Luckmann attach a conception of the Generalised Other to an internalisation of specific societal values I want to emphasise that the Generalised Other that I sought young people to comment upon was beyond any specific society - 'Irish or non-Irish' - which was hoped to be representative of what might possibly be an Other for young people.

Given that there can be a dichotomy in identification - *those we identity with* and *those who we do not identity with* - offering such a general description of 'your family, friends, Irish or non-Irish' was felt to be a better approach to highlight and construct a Generalised Other than focusing only upon *what do your friends think, what do your parents think, what do Americans think, what do Pakistanis think* or *what do other Irish people think*. Though it is accepted that offering a Generalised Other is ambiguous - considering that when someone identified a particular factor they may have only had their parents or friends in mind and not a broad field of influences - it at least offered the best possibility of generalising identity influences and pressures individuals may perceive or encounter in interpreting others peoples relationships to Irishness. Even if the choice was taken to limit the focus of comparison it was assumed that this would still have created problems with identifying what exact comparison the student may be using to compare their symbolic valuation of Irishness against. For instance if it had been requested that students compare their valuation towards *Symbols of Irishness* and that of their parents, an examination of the data would show that some 22.4% (N=79) of students have at least one non-Irish born parent. Would this mean that nearly one-quarter of students would be comparing their understanding of *Symbols of Irishness* against their Irish born parent(s) or against their non-Irish born parent(s) who may make no identification with being Irish? Similarly it can be seen that from the questionnaire results 66.7% (N=235) of young people sampled identified themselves as

having non-Irish born friend(s), so asking the question *what do your friends think* leads to the position of asking whether young people are comparing their understanding of *Symbols of Irishness* against what their non-Irish born friend(s) - who may or may not identify with being Irish - may think, or against their Irish born friend(s) or against perhaps all friends in mind with weighted consideration given?

Accepting that there are limits in assessing *Symbols of Irishness* it was felt that as the theme of symbolic association is so intrinsically important to self and collective identity *Symbols of Irishness* must be addressed in the questionnaire; at both the level of self-identification and that of the Generalised Other. Accepting the imprecision of both the emotional characterisation of symbols - a young person who attends all of Ireland's soccer games home and away may input a strong emotional symbolic bond of *Very Important* into the *Irish soccer team* when equally a person who never attended a soccer game or even watched one may also suggest that the *Irish soccer team* is also a *Very Important* symbolic marking for them - and the difficulty attached to the notional Generalised Other, it was felt that offering a table of *Symbols of Irishness* would be the most productive way to gather information on how young people may, in a general manner, identify with particular *Symbols of Irishness*.

### **3.3.4 General Questions**

This final Section of the questionnaire covered a diverse range of subject matters, where it was hoped more of the individual personality of respondents would come through from their responses. In total nine sub-divided questions were asked in this Section, offering potentially twenty-one different answers. Mindful of the importance of self-identity, and self-identification, but also commonality, the first five questions in this Section asked students to list their three favoured leisure activities, their three favourite TV programmes, their three favoured television channels, their three favoured musical artists and what they are most likely to shop for. Quite obviously these questions are themed at exposing more of *who* the young person is whilst also highlighting what is popularly shared across the sample.

The following question asked the student if they would like their school to encourage the teaching of non-Irish culture in their school. Obviously with the questions regarding social inclusion/exclusion and social avoidance/acceptance in *Section 2: Friendship Networks* a question such as this - questioning support for the encouragement or opposition of

multiculturalism in formal educational - might potentially point towards how comfortable some young people may have been regarding multiculturalism. The next two questions would probe the future projections of young people themselves. Given the dominant role that education and careerism play in the discourse around young people in Ireland - particularly young middle class people - the following four questions concentrated on investigating how people may locate their own personal future educational and career paths. The respondent was asked to indicate if after secondary school they would continue with further education and what mode this education would take - *University, Institute of Technology, FAS course/training programme, Other training programme (such as army, Aer Lingus)* or *If Other please explain*. Because of the popularity of post-secondary education students were asked if they were not pursuing further education why? It was hoped questions such as these might bring more of the individual out in their responses, as with the following question that asked what the preferable career path was. Obviously the visions of young people can be moderated by socialisation so allowing young people to express the area of employment they could see themselves in and the reasons for this was considered to again allow the individuality of the respondent to come through.

The next question addressed an area that can often be considered as a highly emotional matter for young people; identification of a possible role model and why the young person would choose this particular person as a role model. The question itself stated:

It is often said that young people need positive role models; people whom they look up to, whose achievements provide inspiration for others. Who do you consider a role model and why?

Role models can of course be representative of different things, but again the question can be seen as themed towards bringing out more of the respondent's personality and values, as can the penultimate question asking young people what thing they would change 'about Irish society' if they were given the power. This question was open to a vast variety of responses, from very individual concerns to matters that would radically change Irish society. The intention behind this question was to investigate how young people might project Irish society to be - *what their individual projections may imply for Irish society* - into the future. We have seen how Miller saw The Nation as *Extended in history* however it can be seen that the idea of the Nation can be *Extended into history* where people engage with the notion of the Nation as existing in the future.

Directly asking young people the type of changes they would make in contemporary Ireland can indicate what type of future Ireland young Irish people may want to live in.

The final question on the questionnaire offered the respondent the opportunity to address their own valuation, if any, of Irish identity, asking:

Having just completed the questionnaire is there anything now that you think is important in showing Irishness and why?

Keeping with the approach that suggests that identification is uneven it was expected that such a question would offer a wide variety of replies that may specify what some young people believe *being Irish* is.

It is hopefully appreciated from the above breakdown of the questionnaire that the questionnaire was themed at helping survey and illuminate the general and specific areas and issues of both self and collective identity for the young people involved in this research. As the area under investigation involves a diversity of personalised viewpoints it was felt that a mixture of fixed and open questions offered both a means of generalising young peoples' views towards Irishness while also attempting to capture how individual young people may engage with their own and with others' sense of Irishness; *what Irishness may mean, how it may be constituted and how it might be operationalised*. Almost 150 different variables were constructed to help illuminate identity and the following section will consider how questionnaire data was treated.

### **3.4 SPSS coding and inputting**

The coding of the questionnaire data into an SPSS date-set was largely through nominal data-coding. It can be seen from the questionnaire that many questions lent towards a marking of either one value or another so this was the appropriate method to code the majority of questions. Below is a sample of variables employed in the research with how the question where asked and how each was nominally coded:

***Table 3.4 - Sample of how answers nominally coded with the Mean/Proportion and Standard Deviation of the answer given***

Question Asked	How answer was coded	Mean/Proportion	Standard Deviation
Gender	Male - 1 Female - 2	1.5369	.49934
What is your age?	Aged 14 - 14 Aged 15 - 15 Aged 16 - 16 Aged 17 - 17 Aged 18 - 18	15.5920	.65760
What country was your mother born in?	Mother born in Ireland - 1 Mother not born in Ireland - 2	1.1250	.33119
What country was your father born in?	Father born in Ireland - 1 Father not born in Ireland - 2	1.4444	5.18202
Were you born in Ireland?	Yes - 1 No - 2	1.3494	5.17280
Class	Working class - 1 Middle class - 2	1.2642	.44154
Have you any friend(s) not born in Ireland?	Yes - 1 No - 2	1.3286	.47037
Have you any friend(s) whose parent(s) not born in Ireland?	Yes - 1 No - 2	1.2787	.44902
Would you actively avoid forming friendships with someone not born in Ireland?	Yes - 1 No - 2	2.2286	5.13812
Would you actively avoid forming friendships with someone from an ethnic minority?	Yes - 1 No - 2	2.2104	5.16313

When, necessarily, I explain in the analysis how variables were created, most of the variables, and how they are presented, fall within an established sociological approach. For instance it will be seen that throughout the SPSS analysis presented in the following chapters much quantitative analysis is carried out based upon how class and gender may impact negotiations of Irishness. With the category of gender the SPSS codes followed were simply to follow the gender markings that were offered by young people. The designation of class is perhaps seen as more problematic as it is related to each particular school. However I do not see it as such. In Ireland schools are



central sites of class differentiation and segregation, not simply in their geographical locations - in Dublin I can only think of one private school in what might be considered a working class area, Belvedere College in the north-inner city - but people from middle class and working class backgrounds generally attend schools with the inferred social capital of middle class or working class schools. The distinction in schools is about different class socialisation patterns followed in each school and in this research, each middle class school is fundamentally marked by a financial ability to pay school fees. All the schools marked as middle class in this research are private fee-paying schools while all the schools marked working class are publicly funded schools. I do not feel any hesitation in marking schools along these class lines. If a school is located in a wealthy suburb of Dublin 4 and is a fee-paying school the reality is that students in attendance are from middle class backgrounds. For the purpose of this research it has been designated that by and large middle class people attend private schools and working class people attend public schools.

With regard to completely open questions - like role models for instance - the coding followed was nominal but instead of trying to capture all answers I decided to collapse answers into particular representative values. With respect to role models I used the categories of Family, Irish public figure, British public figure, American public figure, Other and No role models. Because certain open questions provided a multiplicity of answers I accepted the need to generalise the answers to maintain core meanings. So for instance when young people were asked what their three favoured leisure activities are it was unsurprising that young people could offer a very wide range of activities. Instead of trying to offer a value for every leisure activity I prioritised those activities which are more popularly followed - reading, watching television, socialising etc. - and collapsed answers like 'playing hockey' or 'playing soccer' into a single value of 'playing sport'. Below is a listing of how particular variable were constructed:

**Table 3.5 - Sample of how specific variables were designed along with the Mean and Standard Deviation values for each variable**

Question Asked	Variable names	How it was coded	Mean	Standard deviation
Please list your three favour leisure activities? (Three separate variable where employed)	leisure1 leisure2 leisure3	Shopping - 1 Cinema - 2 Socialising - 3 Playing sport - 4 Gigs - 5 TV- 6 Reading - 7 Computer - 8 Playing instrument - 9 Listening Music - 10 Other – 11	leisure1 4.5320  leisure2 4.7024  leisure3 5.5705	leisure1 2.90252  leisure2 3.13394  leisure3 3.21194
If you watch television, please list your three favourite programmes (Three separate variable where employed)	ProgTV1 ProgTV2 ProgTV3	Simpson's - 1 Friends - 2 Family Guy - 3 Scrubs - 4 Eastenders - 5 Corry St - 6 Fair City - 7 Sex in the City - 8 Father Ted - 9 OC - 10 Jackass - 11 Buffy - 12 Dawson's Creek - 13 Malcolm in the Middle - 14 The Office - 15 Other – 16	ProgTV1 10.4233  ProgTV2 12.2377  ProgTV3 13.5302	ProgTV1 16.01515  ProgTV2 17.92940  ProgTV3 17.89161

However not all questions could be nominally coded. With the *Symbols of Irishness* section the three different markings were coded ordinally with 1 as Very Important; 2 as Important and 3 as Not Important.

Before finishing this section it is important to point out in relation to the questionnaire and coding that not all schools that returned questionnaires could be inputted into the SPSS data set used. When I began contacting schools for assistance with the questionnaire distribution some schools were sent the pilot questionnaire - which was only technically changed to the final draft questionnaire by adding a clear demarcating line between *Symbols of Irishness* - but some

schools also received the second draft and one school - C3 (with 11 responses) - used this second draft of the questionnaire and distributed this to their students. Though the letter of introduction explained that the researcher would visit participating schools and administer the main questionnaire if the school was responsive, the teacher, even after we had spoke on the phone, went ahead and used the second draft questionnaire. The fundamental differences between the final questionnaire, the pilot questionnaire and the second draft questionnaire relates to how the *Symbols of Irishness* were presented. The pilot and final draft has three columns which asked students if certain *Symbols of Irishness* were *Very Important*, *Important* or *Not Important* while the second draft questionnaire only had two columns which allowed either an *Important* or *Not Important* valuing. With this being the case I have not included any symbolic analysis from C3 School in the results presented towards *Symbols of Irishness* but I have imputed the data into the SPSS data-set on the questions that appeared on the final complete questionnaire. These are essentially the same as contained in the second draft - though wording and presentation may be different the questions addressed are fundamentally the same. There is also a mistake with 1 response from C7 School - (QQ311). A copy of the second draft was mistakenly included with the posting to C7 School and this was completed and returned. As with C3 School I have excluded this questionnaire from the overall results towards *Symbols of Irishness* but have included all other answered questions. The exclusion of these 12 responses drops the overall base figure employed for *Symbols of Irishness* from 352 to 340 responses.

### 3.5 Qualitative Strategy

As levels of identification are always felt to be uneven it was considered that the best way to capture how this unevenness is expressed was through focus group settings. Though some consideration was given towards one-on-one interviewing with young people it was felt that focus groups would offer the best outcome from any investigation as they allow for the possibility of a group dynamic to develop where young people could be directly challenged, not simply by me but by other young people on their negotiations of Irishness. Understanding that the Nation implies the idea of what is commonly shared it was felt that focus groups would then allow a greater investigation of both the commonalities but also importantly the divisions over collective identity. The focus group setting would encourage young people to be actively

engaged in a dialogical discussion not simply with *the researcher* but importantly with *other young people* in the group who may express a different sense and questioning of Irishness. As Harvey *et al.* point out about the use of focus groups:

The interactive aspect of this approach allows ideas to develop, or latent views to emerge that might, in individual interviews, have remained dormant. (2000:19).

It was felt that focus groups would be more dialogically dynamic than one-on-one interviewing and would then potentially allow the greatest opportunities for ‘ideas to develop, or latent views to emerge’ rather than what may have been a more limiting examination in a one-on-one interview situation.

Deciding on conducting focus groups, and particularly conducting groups within schools, was motivated by the context of the research. Rather obviously conducting focus groups on school sites would lessen logistical issues of trying to arrange focus groups with young people outside of a school setting. It is obvious that a prime site to find a concentration of young people is in schools rather than trying to arrange interviews through youth organisations or gatherings - like sports teams, theatre groups, music events etc. Though schools may not have always proved positive towards arranging focus groups it can be appreciated that utilising schools was deemed the most accessible approach to young people. Conducting interviews on schools sites would also reduce ethical issues revolving around a one-on-one interview as well as suggesting informed consent. Focus groups could then be carried out in a secure space that young people at least knew and not necessarily a different research site that might prove alien and intimidating to participants. Having committed myself to considering Irishness through focus groups my next task was to consider what should be addressed within these focus groups and how ideally I was hoping these issues would be addressed.

### ***3.5.1 The Questions Asked***

Creswell writes of how ‘a hallmark of qualitative research today is the deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups. The topics we write about are emotion laden, close to the people, and practical’ (1998:19). To approach these topics Creswell recommends that ‘we ask open-ended research questions, wanting to listen to the participants we are studying and shaping the questions after we “explore”, and we refrain from assuming the role of the expert researcher with the “best” questions’ (ibid). A concern towards the processes of

identification meant that a certain amount of freedom had to be accepted towards how each group may operate. The focus groups would perhaps be the very first time people had to directly address their own and other peoples' identity - *about what may constitute Irishness and what may not* - and consider directly their personal understanding and meaning towards Irish identity. I felt that if I wanted an engagement around the themes of Irish identity, displaying both a level of involvement from participants and honest responses, I should be prepared to engage young people on the themes they saw as important and not necessarily themes I have deemed important in trying to understand Irishness.

After drafting *Questioning Irishness Report 1 2004* for the schools it was obvious that some general symbolic pointers towards identification were more than evident with how some young people symbolically engaged with Irishness. Along with the results given by the *Symbols of Irishness* section there were also comments contained on the questionnaire that pointed towards some particularly suggestive themes for consideration to potentially probe and follow in any focus group discussions. A listing of questions was developed largely from the material supplied from the SPSS questionnaire analysis - particularly from the *Symbols of Irishness* findings - and comments found on the questionnaire that could be further examined and discussed during a focus group. The potential questions were divided into four loose sections themed around the conceptualisations of:

*Self-perception of national worth*

*Being Irish*

*Markers of Irishness*

*Globalisation.*

I considered the above loose themes I wanted discussed within the focus groups. These various themed sections pointed towards an attempt to encompass some of the general themes that were raised by young people on the questionnaire. The idea of *Self-perception of national worth* dealt with how people may positively or negatively identify with Irishness; the *Being Irish* section deals essentially with the operationalisation of Irishness and how this may be experienced; the third section asked about specific *Markers of Irishness*, particularly the Irish language, as this came across in the questionnaire analysis as a significant marker of Irishness for some young people, and the final section - *Globalisation* - was something of a catch-all category dealing with

influences upon identity from the idea of the impact of the Irish Diaspora, multiculturalism and multiple sites of both self and collective identity.

Though it was understood that the questions developed for discussion in the focus groups were in no way exhaustive of the information gathered within the questionnaire - section one and two had only ten questions, section three had seven questions and section four had nine questions - I intended to approach each focus group as open dialogical spaces somewhat following the leads of young people within each of the focus groups rather than necessarily committing myself to addressing all of the questions drawn up. Though there was a listing of questions my attitude towards interviewing was largely to carry out interviewing in a semi-structured floating approach where these themes within identity - *Self-perception of national worth, being Irish, Markers of Irishness*, and *Globalisation* - would be considered but ideally from the perspectives raised within the groups; there was as such no commitment to asking the specific set of questions outlined, rather the questions were treated as something to return to if a particular area of discussion had become exhausted and there was a need to move onto another area for consideration. However though I did not set out to ask these particular fixed questions it should be understood that certain themes around Irish identity were repeatedly raised within each group. Perhaps on a general level this is understandable given that focus groups were addressing the general theme of Irish identity and though I may not have asked each group the specific outlined questions the general themes of identity - such as notions around the Irish language or religion or sports which may have addressed the theme of operationalising Irishness and how these representations were understood personally within the group - were very much addressed repeatedly by most groups. Understanding my concern was rather more towards addressing the themes of identity than slavishly following a pattern of set questions helped develop a multiplicity of ways that each theme could be approached. For instance in the section on *Self-perception of national worth* I had a question that asked students to respond to David Trimble's characterisation of southern Ireland as monocultural, pathetic and insular. This was designed to see how students may have negotiated critical themes towards Irish identity and though not all groups were asked to comment on Trimble's characterisation the theme of criticality towards Irishness would certainly be probed if students were engaged with discussing views towards an International Other, racism, religion or a host of other avenues that could each allow some input into how criticism towards Irishness was dealt with by young people. Because the discussions

remained very much focused around the themes I wanted to consider this acted as some fixed point of reference but as group dynamics differed, how these themes of Irishness were considered often differed.

This freedom towards raising questions, and how they were raised, was motivated by the need to promote an organic approach towards focus groups and allow reflexive responses to what was assumed as the unevenness of identification, particularly given how these discussions were undertaken in what may be regarded as a manufactured setting. I was trying to generate an organic feeling suggestive of the idea that themes or comments stemmed from within the group and were not necessarily introduced into the group. However it should be understood that if this approach was to work I had to connect with the participants, and hopefully after a short time within the group could include myself as *in the group* and could therefore raise questions, and perhaps lead discussions about the themes raised.

Writing of the distinction between structured and semi-structured and/or unstructured interviews Denscombe considers that semi-structured and unstructured interviews permit more freedom of expression and:

allow interviewees to use their own words and develop their own thoughts. Allowing interviewees to ‘speak their minds’ is a better way of discovering things about complex issues and, generally, semi-structured and unstructured interviews have as their aim ‘discovery’ rather than ‘checking’. They lend themselves to in-depth investigations, particularly those which explore personal accounts of experiences and feelings’ (1998:113).

I was quite prepared to allow students to go on conversational tangents and even sometimes conversing over each other in the hope that it would build a conversationally interactive environment for the expression of honest views. Though I may have often lead the discussions I was at times quite prepared not to interject into the conversations young people were having between themselves and rather wait, listen and ask for fuller commentary on what was said and then sometimes connect what may have been said with a general theme of group discussion. The hope in allowing this freedom of expression was that it would encourage an environment for honest expressions of viewpoints about identity but expressed in a conversational space where young people were being as natural with each other and with me as was thought possible. I had to encourage a relaxed space for this freedom of expression and if this entailed following the lead

of young people, sometimes prioritising the areas they wanted to consider, I had accepted that I would do this. In realising that I allowed freedom of expression I was hoping to develop what may be considered a *conversation space* and not an overtly recognised *researched space*.

I considered my priority within the focus groups was to get people to address Irish identity and self-identity in an open and honest way and because the discussion was encouraged as conversational, rather than interrogative, I could also have the freedom of expression to raise questions as they often materialised from the discussions within the groups. I understood that the topic of Irish identity - *What is it to be Irish? How important is the Irish language to my self-identity? Do I meet any criteria for being Irish, do I even care?* etc. - would not necessarily be one that students were in a constant conscious internal or external dialogical engagement with but I wanted to make the process engaging and to develop the ability for unlimited freedom of expression. For instance it was seen above that the issue of *race* came across as a definite issue for some teachers and Principals when trying to secure the assistance of some middle class schools with this research. From the perspective of teachers and Principals perhaps it is understandable that certain questions might be understood as leading to a discussion of *race*. Some questions within the *Globalisation* section could certainly be considered as avenues allowing a discussion of *race* as they were designed to probe the idea of a multicultural Ireland and how attached young people may be to these ideas and any felt necessity to be born in Ireland to be Irish. For instance this can be seen from two of the set questions which asked:

Do people feel you have to be born in Ireland to be Irish?

Another comment from the questionnaire stated how a person wanted ‘... less cultures in Ireland’ (QQ87). How do people feel about the idea of a multi-cultural Ireland?

These are sensitive questions that could obviously illuminate a great deal about identity for young people. If honestly addressing these questions, and particularly approaching the notion of racialising Irishness as white for instance, is a challenge to what is perhaps the dominant institutional discourse within the school, for example embracing multiculturalism, young people needed both the encouragement and ability to express themselves against multiculturalism if necessary. The fact that a young person or some young people may have agreed with this statement of ‘less cultures in Ireland’ or that only people born in Ireland of Irish parents are Irish for instance, I felt required the type of dialogical undertaking - the suggested conversational



space and not the research process where I was interrogating or judging young people on who they are or what they felt - that would encourage this type of expression.

### ***3.5.2 Conversational Space***

I did not want to give the impression that any focus groups would be difficult for any person to engage with nor that the participants would be embedded within a particularly noted research space, rather I wanted a welcoming and interactive conversational space. The desire for a conversational space against perhaps a specifically experienced researched space had some bearing not simply upon how questions may have been delivered - perhaps following comments within the groups - but also on the usage of the focus group space itself. For instance thinking of the specific distinction between researched and conversational space, I gave some consideration into introducing particular representations relating to Irishness into each focus group and decorating each room with national representations - Irish flags, themes of rurality, pictures of historical and contemporary Irish figures etc. - but it was felt that decorating the room with such representations would dramatically alter the engagement I was asking of young people. I did not want young people to *feel researched* and embedded within a researched space where the environment may have suggested that *the researcher* was intimately examining, judging and categorising all their words, gestures and reactions regarding their engagements within the focus group. I felt that undertaking such an approach, transforming a familiar school space into an unfamiliar research space, would place too strong a barrier between myself and the other group members. The potential would have been to formally fix the discussion within the idea that people were being researched and that might possibly lead to a lack of complete or honest engagement with the issues raised, as young people may have been unwilling to express their views in the knowledge that perhaps a judgemental barrier existed between *the researcher* and *the researched*.

Studying young people in the context of their everyday schooled environment was hoped to allow greater openness towards Irishness than engaging participants in suggested researched settings that might potentially lead 'to contrived findings that are out of context' (Creswell, 1998:17). Though the recording equipment - a mini-disc - was visible it was always placed beside me so as not to appear an intrusive recording devise. The groups were conducted in a circle and obviously placing the mini-disc in the centre of this circle would have allowed clearer recorded comments but I felt that this would have emphasised the formality of

the interview and taken away from the conversational space I desired. Similarly, though I was taking notes throughout the focus group I attempted to make this seem like a very casual thing to do, as if I was cross-checking with comments already said or considering raising another question. This emphasis upon naturalism did, however, cause a problem most particularly regarding monitoring the recording of focus groups. There was a recording problem with the mini-disc in a number of groups, which was only realised after the groups had concluded. The first group in A1 School was not recorded, nor was the first group in B2 School and the second recording from B2 School was very low and inaudible. If I had paid more attention to the malfunctioning recording equipment I would have spotted the mistake earlier but to have been monitoring the recording equipment would have highlighted that I was researching what people were saying.

To encourage dialogical engagement, and try and emphasise a conversational space in each group I would introduce myself and then ask each member from the group to offer their names and a short introduction about themselves - this was a ploy not simply to apply better identification of the participants voices when transcribing each focus group but also, importantly, it was hoped that such space to express something of the personal individuality would allow the interviewees to be more relaxed in the company of both *a stranger* and *a researcher*. After we had all made our introductions I would generally read out the following statement:

What we are going to try and consider today is what it means for you people to be Irish. Asking you what it is to be Irish may seem easy and straight-forward but when people usually start thinking about their national identity it's often a very difficult thing to start expressing your feelings about. I hope the questions are not too abstract and if something needs explaining just ask. A lot of the questions have come from responses to a questionnaire that I have been distributing to schools for about 18 months, so these are questions that in many ways have come from people your own age group and sharing similar circumstances. What I need today is your honest views about what you feel it is like to be Irish. Whatever is said is totally confidential and no person will in any way be identifiable in the finished research, I won't be approaching anybody's teachers or parents, so please speak your mind.

Before I would begin any focus group properly I would again generally emphasise what we would be discussing, so endorsing the SAI Research Ethics guidelines that research participants be fully informed about ‘what the research is about’ ("<http://www.ucd.ie/sai/saiethic.html>") and the confidentiality of the discussion we were about to have. I was also mindful that views expressed by participants might be said solely for the benefit of the researcher, following the expectation of what is *the right thing to say* in this particular moment. I hoped to counteract this by emphasising that the focus group was about *them*, and they should express what they felt confidentially.

Though one accepts Denscombe’s (1998) distinction between an interview and a conversation - interviews are recorded, lead by the researcher and consented to - I strove to develop a group environment that would suggest itself to young people as rather more of a *conversation with somebody* than a hierarchically formalised focus group interview conducted within a researched space with the researcher leading and directing all avenues of discussion. It was important, for me, to build a relaxed environment for the expression of viewpoints as it was felt that a relaxed environment was more conducive to interactive conversational space where people can be *more themselves*. I had no problem using my own life experiences to develop some picture of who I was in the hope that the young people might reciprocate my honesty and show me some of who they were and engage honestly in the discussion. Gaining the trust to allow, it was hoped, an open and frank expression of the views of young people was an important feature within the focus group settings. Accepting that the focus group dynamics would be ‘affected by the personal identity of the researcher’ (Denscombe, 1998:116) I strove to be as natural in disposition as possible and I attempted to address people on an equal footing, hopefully deconstructing any barriers between the notion of *the researcher* and *the researched*. Denscombe, in highlighting the reflexivity embedded in particular methodical approaches, points out that:

A researcher can never stand outside the social world he or she is studying in order to gain some vantage point from which to view things from a perspective which is not contaminated by contact with that social world. Inevitably, the sense we make of the social world and the meaning we give to events and situations are shaped by our experience as social beings and the legacy of the values, norms, and concepts we have assimilated during our lifetime (1998:240).

If I could not be natural - shaped by my own social experience and with 'the legacy of the values, norms, and concepts' that I may have 'assimilated during' my own 'lifetime' - how could I expect young people to engage organically - in a language and manner that they felt comfortable expressing themselves with - on the topic of Irishness? Though I accepted that 'it is very difficult to reach a situation in which the power relationships between the researcher and the researched are equal' (Harvey *et al.*, 2000:130) I consciously strove to remove any hierarchical barrier 'between the researcher and the researched'. For instance I decided that I would, when possible, make efforts at opening a common identification with group members - be it through sport or through music or other interests - when possible to show that I too can enjoy the same activities as they can. For instance in A1 School, which has a long history of rugby sporting achievements, I offered some commonality with some in the groups on the basis that I was a member of a rugby club and just like some of them I attended certain rugby games. Even though introducing myself revealed certain class distinctions, I could still emphasis a commonality based around sport with some students in A1 School. The same would often apply to other school groups when music was raised as a point of interest when students introduced themselves. When music was offered as an interest I could often questions the interviewee and find some commonality we could each claim together. Even if I could not project a commonality - or could joke about our uncommonality - I could at least encourage the student to talk about their interests and hopefully be more at ease with the focus group environment and hopeful more at ease with the researcher and comfortable to respond to any challenging questions raised within the group.

However though I may have desired a non-hierarchical engagement with the people involved in this research this, of course, may not necessarily be how young people may have perceived my position or each other's position within the groups. Denscombe highlights that 'the *sex*, the *age* and the *ethnic origins* of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal' (1998:116, italics in original). Something of my power - as simply an adult perhaps - was seen during my time at A1 School. After their lunch break students at A1 School must sign an afternoon roll call and I was struggling to get through a very congested volume of human traffic in the corridor. When students saw it was a non-student who was trying to get through - *an adult*, perhaps a teacher, perhaps a parent or perhaps a guest - they apologised and usually informed the person beside them or in front or behind them that they should make room for my movement. This

somewhat shows that although I may have attempted to be non-hierarchical towards young people they might not necessarily be able to approach me in such a manner.

Accepting Denscombe's view that approaching a focus group as a conversation can result in the researcher being 'lulled into a sense of false security', I remained conscious of the 'sensitivity to the complex nature of interaction during the interview itself' (Denscombe, 1998:110). I understood what I was enquiring into - *identity* - and I kept somewhat within the themes I wanted to discuss but also allowed some flexibility towards what the young people wanted to discuss. If respecting this 'sensitivity' meant sacrificing time to allow students to enter conversational tangents or encouraging people be themselves I felt this was the best way to essentially allow freedom of expression and promote, as natural as possible, an open interactive conversational space for young people to engage with the issue of identity. Certainly on a level of conversational engagement some focus groups unquestionably point to succeeding in getting young people involved in the consideration of the topic. For instance with some groups it was agreed with students that they would last only forty minutes in duration when in fact they often went on for an hour - indeed some groups went beyond what was recorded on the mini-disc. It may be easy to dismiss this engagement as young people wanting to stay out of class longer but some groups actually went into break time, suggesting some level of genuine interest.

Avoiding, or at least trying to avoid, any suggestion that the focus group was a formalised interrogative space not only addressed the 'sensitivity' of group interactions - the importance that I was not seen as judging peoples' identity or viewpoints on identity in a interrogative manner - but also the potential 'sensitivity' of the topic itself. Again if the notion of *race* was a way some young people negotiated their own or other people's Irishness I needed people to be confident and comfortable enough to express that and be prepared to explain such views. If some young people were uncomfortable, as some were, with the notion of a multicultural Ireland then I needed young people to feel they were in an environment that could allow their feelings to be spoken. Though I may have hoped that *all* people within the groups would engage in the conversation not *all* of the young people did speak. In saying not all young people were engaged with the research I can only point to one individual, Paddy from A3 School, who essentially dismissed themselves from discussing Irishness, who after introducing himself did not once raise any comments about identity throughout the entire session. However in considering the entirety of focus groups most people offered something about either self or

collective identity and most people made some level of engagement - it was often the case that some people would be more considerate on issues or themes that seemed to arouse personal interest. But it should be emphasised that some groups proved somewhat dominated by particular individuals. Staying with A3 School in Group 2 the four male students within the group - Andy, Terry, Ruari and Darragh - were not as engaged with the topic as either Janet or Niamh, though it was not necessarily that they did not express views towards Irishness, it was rather that Niamh had a particularly strong personality and was fully committed to the issues raised and it seemed to intimate the four male students. Generalising it could be claimed that Niamh had a very positive modern understanding of Irishness and any challenge upon her fixed notions of Irishness, one could foresee, would be challenged veraciously by Niamh herself.

Denscombe (1998) points out that a potential limitation with group discussion is that they can lead towards group's consensus with some individuals not being prepared to step outside what may seem the norm of the group's view. The questionnaire results showed a diversity of understandings towards Irishness and one can assume that facilitating this diversity was how the questionnaire was both individualised and carried out confidentially allowing young people to write whatever they wanted. Obviously focus groups can be more constrained - people might not say whatever they want perhaps limited to a group norm - as participation within a dialogical group setting may have comments challenged or indeed reinforced or asked to further explain what they may mean. However I feel the technique of approaching the groups as conversational space directed by a semi-structuring discussion encouraged dialogue - and importantly coupled with having the very good fortune to be working with very able young people who seemed to generally be comfortable with engaging in the consideration of Irish identity - placed many people in an environment where they could freely speak. My impression is that people spoke openly about their sense of both self and collective identity, allowing a great deal of honesty to be expressed outside any potential group norms. This can be heard in the groupings themselves, on the responses to 'sensitive' issues like *race*, religion, the Irish language or immigration, where students expressed conflicting views to other members and often challenged other members on something that they may have said. Though of course group or social norms may have been evident, as in the operation of ideology with rather what was not said or perhaps how certain things may have been said, I feel that young people were willing, and able, to express different views outside of a group norm.

Though most people may not necessarily approach their identity as anything other than a naturalised understanding of *who they are*, and so may not overtly question their identity until perhaps asked, I found that the young people when questioned, seemed to be at ease and very open about addressing identity, self or collective. Approaching the groupings as conversational settings seemed to have encouraged this freedom of expression and openness towards addressing questions. Though of course the area of identity can be highly sensitive it seems that when considering the broad compass of Irishness - what may have been discussed within the groups - young people were quite prepared to voice their views. Though there may have been times when I had to pull discussions back into the domain of Irishness I would try and do this humorously rather than aggressively or necessarily formally so the conversations within the groups could continue. Though I would have liked to consider in much fuller detail certain elements around identity - such as the commodification of Irish identity and specific youth cultures - presenting the activity of the focus groups as a conversation did limit me in how I could try and introduce topics of discussion, but, I feel, it also importantly allowed a straightforward sense of engagement for the participants. It will be seen when the commentary within focus groups is considered young people appeared to respond very articulately to the *conversation* we were having around identity.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Individual identity articulation and overlapping collective identification can be difficult factors to encapsulate and the full extent of any meaning towards a particular identity may not necessarily be adequately explained or explored through the exclusive use of either a qualitative or quantitative format. Using a dual approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodology, to help capture meanings of identity for young people, was felt to help describe more fully how Irishness could be understood - both in its generality and in an individual context. By utilising both a qualitative and quantitative approach it was hoped that the research would pass Denscombe's test for 'Good research':

Social researchers rarely, if ever, rely on one approach [qualitative or quantitative] to the exclusion of the other. Good research tends to use parts of both approaches (1998:173).

Though the questionnaire had its limitation - the subjective reading of *Symbols of Irishness* for instance - it could at least offer an opportunity to begin characterising and generalising Irishness. This generalising of Irishness also of course has its limitation, the focus on Dublin for instance within the context that Ireland is a changing society. How some young people addressed the open questions within the questionnaire certainly suggested a specific sense of identity, which could be explored more fully at an interactive focus group level.

The approach taken towards the focus group was to attempt to promote a dynamic space allowing for a multiplicity of views and understandings around notions of Irish identity. As well as the potential diverging views arising within each focus group I could use information and details from the questionnaire results and other focus groups to suggest how some other young people may have differently negotiated and interpreted Irishness. Because I was well acquainted with the themes and comments from the questionnaire and focus groups I was in a position to challenge or reinforce any suggestions towards implied notions of Irishness stemming from focus group discussions. A priority approaching the focus groups was my commitment to attempting to get young people to be themselves - *to express their honest views* - and express themselves openly and without hesitation towards me but also towards other group members, on particular viewpoints towards their identity. I would be *forcing a discussion* on Irishness and I would be expressing challenging views - ideas young people may not consciously consider or that may have been diametrically opposed to or at least contrary to how some young people themselves may personally negotiate Irishness - but in so doing I would have to allow the freedom for young people to be encouraged to reflect and articulate their understanding of any questions or comments raised. If I was to probe deeper any comment that may have been expressed, I needed young people to be comfortable to respond to me, or indeed respond to another person within the group when they may have challenged a comment. The ability to challenge views towards identity was felt to require a suggestively open conversational space rather than a formalised and hierarchical research space whereby the participants might be intimidated to react due to formalised factors of my authority as *the researcher*. How adequate these methodological approaches were towards attempting to gain an understanding about young people in Dublin will be tested over the following chapters.



# Chapter 4

## Catholic Identity and Irish identities

A central historical feature helping constitute Irish identity was a common understanding of Irishness securely fixed within the parameters of a Catholic identity. Michael O'Connell has written of how 'for most of the twentieth century, being Irish meant being Irish Catholic - the history of Irishness is often the history of Irish Catholicism' (2001:20). Religious identity contributed 'for most of the twentieth century', and unquestionably before, to the construction of a vividly shaped and particularly widespread and fundamentally understood conception of Catholic identity privileged within Irish identity. According to Victor Griffin, a southern Protestant essentially writing of the post-independent period, 'There was the accepted and general connotation that the authentic Irish person was a Roman Catholic, anti-British nationalist, and supporter of all things Gaelic - in that order' (2002:46). How privileged Catholic identity was within common understandings of being Irish, certainly historically, is seen in the dramatic decline of the Protestant population of southern Ireland between 1911-1926 - with over 100,000 Protestants migrating over this period (["http://www.cso.ie/"](http://www.cso.ie/)) - suggesting something of how Protestants saw their place in any post-colonial Ireland. Even present-day understandings of Irish identity can continue to position Catholic identity as a central feature of being Irish. The unwillingness of many northern Protestants to see themselves as Irish speaks of a common perception held by northern Protestants that being Irish necessarily implies something about being Catholic.

Though being Irish could never be restricted to Roman Catholics - one would have to hold a very restricted view of history not to realise the dramatic impact that non-Catholics, both past and present, have had upon Irish identity - there is certainly some underlying truth in the

idea of what was accepted as Griffin's 'authentic Irish person'. However notions of this 'authentic Irish person' have undergone radical revision over the last 30-40 years and the past 10-15 years have intensified this questioning process. When once it seemed quite uncontested to describe Ireland as 'a Catholic nation', as de Valera did in 1935 (quoted in Whyte, 1980:48), the same description cannot be so easily offered, or offered with such security of conviction, about contemporary Ireland. Littleton (2006) writes how it was only in the latter half of the Twentieth century that people began to fundamentally interrogate the bonding of Catholic with Irish identity. When once it had been understood, 'with few exceptions', that 'being Irish meant being Catholic' (Littleton, 2006:26), contemporary Ireland is now generally argued to be marked by a decline in notions of Catholic identity as privileged within Irish identity. It is often discursively emphasised that the de-coupling of Catholic and Irish identity that has occurred signals a different experience and approach to Irishness. Where traditional Irishness was attached to privileging Catholicism with Irishness - so for instance implicitly excluding or treating as Other non-Catholics from Irish identity - contemporary Irish identity is often argued as less exclusionary, certainly on the grounds of religious identity. Beginning the investigation of young peoples' conceptualisations of Irishness on the theme of religion allows us to question the extent of any de-coupling that may have occurred and consider if a historically significant and central constituent marker of Irishness retains any influence on how young people construct Irishness.

This chapter will highlight how young people share two particularly fore-fronted understandings when negotiating the idea of Catholic identity marking Irishness:

- 1) Catholic identity is essentially removed from how young people, in general, like to understand and express their own understandings of contemporary Irish identity, but;
- 2) Catholic identity can be a highly significant marker employed by the Generalised Other for understanding Irish identity.

These two levels of understanding suggest a notable cleavage in conceptualising Irish identity but also suggest that there continues to be some shared connecting notion of understanding Irish identity through a religious marker; in a personalised sense there is an active displacement of religious identity from Irishness but for the Generalised Other there is often an expression of a felt privileged connection between Catholic identity and Irish identity. Though it will be shown that substantial numbers of young people may mark the *Catholic Church* as an important

symbolic understanding of their identity, this is typically as far as identification will allow. Though there is then on one level symbolic self-identification towards the *Catholic Church* we will see that there is a discernible difference between how young people personally symbolically mark the *Catholic Church* against how privileged it is regarded for a Generalised Other. The analysis will show that though religion may still play some part in constructing Irishness it is generally argued to matter a great deal more for other people than for young people in general. It will be seen that how young people commonly negotiate Catholic identity, particularly when in focus groups, is far removed from the privileging it once experienced within Irishness. Indeed the Catholic Church, and the identity that may follow from this, can be treated quite negatively by some young people. How young people fundamentally negotiate religious and Irish identity highlights how uncoupled the notion of Catholic is from Irish identity and points towards a dominant shared conception of Irish identity that is generally emptied of any privileged notion that Catholic identity may somehow connect favourably with contemporary Irish identity.

## **4.1 Symbolic relationships towards the Catholic Church**

A slender majority of young people - 54.1% (N=177) - placed either a Very Important or Important symbolic value in the *Catholic Church* and 45.3% (N=148) ranked the *Catholic Church* as Not Important in their own understandings of Irishness. There is clearly some contestation of the symbolic significance of the *Catholic Church*. When the results are broken down through class and gender profiles it can be seen how uneven identification and contestation towards the *Catholic Church* is:

**Table 4.1 - Gender and Class breakdown of personal symbolic attachment to the Catholic Church<sup>1</sup>**

Symbol of the Catholic Church	Very Important or Important	Not Important
Male		
Middle Class	48.4% (N=15)	51.6% (N=16)
Working Class	60.5% (N=69)	38.6% (N=44)
Female		
Middle Class	34.5% (N=20)	65.5% (N=38)
Working Class	58.8% (N=73)	40.3% (N=50)

Both working class males and females place similar valuations on how they personally value the *Catholic Church* as a Very Important or Important marker of Irishness, at 60.5% (N=69) and 58.8% (N=73) respectively. Middle class students' demonstrate lower levels of identification with only a minority of both males - 48.4% (N=15) - and females - 34.5% (N=20) - positively valuing some connection between their own sense of Irishness and the *Catholic Church*. From all cohorts it can be seen that it is middle class females who most disassociate themselves from any personal sensing of Irishness connected to the *Catholic Church*. Virtually two-thirds, 65.5% (N=38), of middle class females marked the *Catholic Church* as Not Important within their own sensing of Irishness. Middle class females' disassociation is particularly notable when placed against working class identification, showing over 25% distance between middle class females and the working class cohorts. Though middle class males also symbolically disassociated their own sense of Irishness from the *Catholic Church*, with 51.6% (N=16) claiming it is Not Important, it is obviously not as acute as with young middle class females.

Though personal self-identification is highly uneven, when asked to rank other peoples' symbolic understanding towards the *Catholic Church* a substantial majority - 76.1% (N=251) - projected this Generalised Other to hold a Very Important or Important symbolic association. When a similar breakdown is carried out along gender and class profiles it is quite evident that, unlike person valuations, there is a shared feeling on the part of young people that the Generalised Other views Irishness through a symbolic referencing of the *Catholic Church*:

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<sup>1</sup> R value of .001 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Catholic Church based upon Class, and R value of .008 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Catholic Church based upon Gender.

**Table 4.2 - Gender and Class breakdown of symbolic attachment to the Catholic Church for Generalised Other**

Symbol of the Catholic Church	Very Important or Important	Not Important
<i>Male</i>		
Middle Class	78% (N=25)	22% (N=7)
Working Class	75.7% (N=84)	24.3% (N=27)
<i>Female</i>		
Middle Class	75% (N=45)	25% (N=15)
Working Class	77.6% (N=97)	21.6% (N=27)

Considering how radically different self-identification are the views towards the significance of the *Catholic Church* for the Generalised Other shows a remarkable degree of consistency. It can be seen how each cohort projects similar rankings in the seventy percent range for a Generalised Other as Very Important or Important and in the twenty percent range for Not Important. Quite clearly young people consider the *Catholic Church* as a significant symbol employed by others in forming an understanding of Irish identity. The substantial differential between self-identifications and how others are projected to symbolically value the *Catholic Church* suggests a fracture within the notion of a shared understanding of Irish identity.

## 4.2 Explaining symbolic identification

Some of these differences in class and gender valuations can be explained methodologically; of the four middle class schools that returned questionnaires only one - A4 School an all female school which returned a sample of 22 students, comprising just one quarter of middle class respondents - holds an explicit Roman Catholic ethos. There were two middle class schools - both mixed - holding a Protestant ethos - A2 and A5 schools' - and one school - A3 School that is mixed - promoting an interdenominational ethos. Of the eight working class schools that returned questionnaires six schools hold a Roman Catholic ethos and two are interdenominational. Of these six working class Roman Catholic schools three are all female, two are all male and one is mixed and of the two interdenominational schools one is mixed and the other is an all-female school. It should be expected that middle class schools with a specific religious ethos other than Roman Catholic and therefore attended by at least some people sharing this religious ethos, would hold less symbolic investment in the *Catholic Church* compared to

the working class schools that have a Roman Catholic ethos, which one would reasonable expect to be largely attended by Roman Catholics.

Though school ethos and various religious backgrounds may play some part in identification there is also other general social features that can help explain symbolic identification towards the *Catholic Church*. Williams has emphasised how embedded religion is in Irish culture and ‘that an encounter with religion is not normally something that can be avoided’ (2005:33). Obviously the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Irish population, and the overwhelming majority of people in Dublin, would still be regarded as nominal Catholics can affect identity. Writing in the 1980s Nic Ghiolla Phádraig highlights how ‘religion still provides the background for the more important landmarks in people’s lives’ (1986:141). Highlighting this she pointed at a comparison with other countries where rituals of birth, death or marriage can be carried out in civil arrangements but in Ireland such occasions ‘are almost exclusively religious ceremonies’ (ibid). Though there has been an increase in civil marriages, and also the number of people who do not mark either birth or death as a religious occasion, it would still be an exception for the majority of young people involved in this research not to have been baptised for instance into the Roman Catholic faith, or that the majority of young people would not have made their Confession and Communion. Formal and public religious ceremonies, like Confession or Communion, can, of course, continue to make some impression upon understandings of self and collective symbolic identity and may heighten, for some, the symbolic importance of the *Catholic Church*. There may also be other factors outside of formal school ethos or symbolic ceremonies that can lead people towards identification with the *Catholic Church*. The role of sports, for instance, or more particularly support for Celtic, may have some effect upon principally working class males, the grouping most symbolically committed to the *Catholic Church*. One person, when addressing the question of what they saw as expressing Irishness, simply wrote ‘a Celtic jersey’ (QQ184). Certainly how Celtic can be read as an ethno-symbolic marker was emphasised by a middle class grouping when distinguishing how religion may matter in the north of Ireland but not in the south:

Tony - In the north it [religion] would matter as people are going around wearing Celtic jerseys, just doing that to kind of show they’re like, you walked in on us like.

Ray - I bet they don’t go to mass.

Tony - Yeah that's what I mean they're just doing that to show that they're Irish or whatever

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

Tony pinpoints how Celtic can be read as an explicit linkage between religion and nationality and this leads us into another important factor that can effect self-identification towards the *Catholic Church*; the presentation of the National Question.

Though the National Question was not directly addressed in any formal way within the questionnaire it is an issue that did arouse some comments from respondents. Asked what he would change about Ireland one person wrote 'we would have 32 countries because they belong to us' (QQ191). The social presentations of the situation in the north of Ireland remains strongly dominated by the approach that positions Catholics as Irish and nationalist - the group *we* identify with - and Protestants as British and Unionist or Loyalist - the grouping *we* certainly do not identify with. For instance another student, a middle class female, who symbolically marked the *Catholic Church* as both Very Important for herself and for the Generalised Other, wrote that what she would like to change about Ireland is the attitudes of northern Protestants:

prods in northern Ireland (I am aware of the irony because I go to a protestant school) (QQ144).

However Northern Ireland can play a dual role in negotiating Irishness which may explain some of the disparity between personal evaluations and those for the Generalised Other. Northern Ireland can also be emphasised as a reason for avoiding any emotive linkage between religious and national identity. There can be a dismissal of the conflict in the north for being essentially ridiculous in the context of contemporary pluralist Ireland, for instance 'I would change the situation in the north. I would make the religions tolerable of each other so the war would be over' (QQ333). Similarly another student, from B2 School, when responding to what they would change in contemporary Ireland wrote:

the troubles in the north. It seems stupid and ignorant that they can't sort out their problems (QQ192).

This comment directly views the conflict as 'stupid and ignorant' but also situates the problem as '*their* problem' and not necessarily *ours*, despite the question being themed at what a person would change about *our* society. Though there may well be identification towards the group *we*

identify with, Northern Ireland can also serve as a negative example of the consequences of emphasising religion as a central constituent of identity.

Although it is unsurprising that some young people symbolically emphasise the *Catholic Church* because of an understanding that Catholics in Northern Ireland are the groupings *we* identify with, it is equally unsurprising if young people identify with the *Catholic Church* through a reading of Irish history in general, which may highlight the oppression of Catholics under British colonialism. Given the power to transform contemporary Irish society one working class person wrote:

I would have stopped the English from oppressing us as many Irish people suffered and were killed by the English just because they were Catholic (QQ263).

Though this young person socially operates in present-day Dublin his vision - even when offered the ability to change a feature of contemporary Ireland - is determinedly fixed to resolving something from the past. This historical intersection of religious and Irish identity, and how these processes seemed once accepted as naturally formatted has established, within some young peoples' consciousness, some symbolic correlation between Irish identity and the *Catholic Church*. Indeed given the significance of Catholicism in Irish history, how Catholic identity, certainly at one time, 'became inseparable from Irish nationalism' (Cohane, 1969:97), one could perhaps expect some symbolic identification. However when young people are involved in focus groups a more complex reading of Irish identity and religious and Catholic identity emerges. Though a slender majority of young people may hold a symbolic identification with the *Catholic Church* when engaged in active dialogical conversations about religion a very different emphasis is seen on the relationship between Irishness and religion. Though the evidence from the questionnaires implies some de-coupling of Catholic and Irish identity - most clearly seen in the disparity between self-identifications and de-identifications when compared to that of the Generalised Other - when in focus groups it is striking that a particularly strong picture is evident of how uncoupled self-conceptions of Irish identity is from any religious identity.

#### ***4.2.1 Negotiating the Catholic Church***

Unquestionably general social attitudes in Ireland towards the Roman Catholic Church have been radically altered over the past 30 years. Greeley and Ward may question *How 'Secularised' Is the Ireland We Live In?* but concede that if a measurement of Christianity is based within



‘attitudes to sex and authority... then religion among the Irish is in decline’ (2000:582). Even when notions of religion can be fore-fronted in a young person’s consciousness the importance of the Catholic Church can itself be disconnected from personalised religious meaning. In a significant break from the norm of role model selection a young person offered their role model as:

Jesus. Yeah I’m not being sarcastic he is the best person I’ve ever known. He’s alive. Also Frank Sinatra - but Jesus is so much better (QQ323).

The defensiveness of the student is evident with the reassurance and insistence that having Jesus as her role model was ‘not being sarcastic’. Though this person marks the *Catholic Church* as both personally *Not Important* and as *Not Important* to the Generalised Other it can be seen that she marks *Spirituality - or beliefs in god* as *Very Important*. This person may or may not be a member of another Christian community but she is certainly attending a school with a Roman Catholic ethos, which highlights how irrespective of this person’s religious identity it is not seemingly fixed within a Catholic identity. This was the *only* person who participated in either completing a questionnaire or contributing to a focus group who exhibited such highly positive views towards Jesus, religion, or even such a strong sense of spirituality - she was the only person, for instance, who mentioned overseas volunteering or who could picture herself following a religious career path.

Greeley and White in challenging the notion that contemporary Ireland is secularised - in the context that religiosity in Ireland looks ‘indistinguishable from other materialist, secular, consumerist neo-pagan countries of Europe’ (2000:581) - emphasise that particular articles of faith, like a belief in God or mass attendance - remained relatively stable over the 1990s. Certainly the sense of the spiritual was clearly emphasised by another young person who, when asked for a role model, can be seen as privileging Jesus:

my friends who are better than me at things. No one person in particular, I just try to aspire to the ideals taught to me by parents, family and friends. (€10 bet only 1 in 100 people say ‘Jesus’ or ‘God’ like they should in this question) (QQ146).

Though this person saw ‘only 1 in 100’ answering with God or Jesus, they feel when addressing this question young people ‘*should*’ be answering with Jesus or God. One of the reasons why young people do not have to offer Jesus or God is of course that they do not have to find any inspiration in them. For instance, consider the role model chosen by another young person:

Satan: once an angel he refused to honour the human race so he was expelled from heaven. He was one of the few who actually saw the truth. Humans are a disease (but I still love them) (QQ67).

Would one expect to find a positive mention of Satan as a role model from young people in Ireland as recently as the 1980s?

Young peoples' most immediate general approach towards religion or the Catholic Church is not to emphasise Jesus, or indeed Satan, but rather highlighting the unwarranted power of the Church. White highlights how the Roman Catholic Church in contemporary Ireland has lost its privileged social position and how increasingly people engage with the Church on a level that holds 'that the Church has too much power in society' (2006:251). Something of the perception of 'too much power' can clearly be seen in some questionnaire responses when young people are offered the ability to change something about contemporary Irish society:

I am sick of the catholic church's opinion on many important issues (QQ22)

[change] this insane Catholicism get rid of the church (QQ67)

I would like [to] change influence of catholic church (QQ204)

[change] the power of the catholic church. (QQ322)

Greeley and Ward highlight that it is younger people who most feel 'that the Churches have too much power in Ireland' (2000:585), and this feeling is certainly evident within the young people researched. Replying to the question about the power to change one thing about Irish society, a person wrote:

The power of the catholic church. My mother is one of those women who votes the way the church does and so on and I wish more people would have their own opinions (QQ322).

This person is pointing at both the generational difference that suggests it is older people - Generalised Others - who are more committed to the Roman Catholic Church than younger people but also the process of individualisation that is affecting young people in Dublin and indeed Ireland generally. Wishing 'people would have their own opinions' is wishing 'people would have their own [individual] opinions'.

The feelings towards the Church that it is both too powerful but also lacks legitimacy are central understandings in how many young people engaged with the Catholic Church. Niamh,

from the middle class interdenominational school, highlights both the changed social circumstances that the Roman Catholic Church operates under in contemporary Ireland and also how the Church, for her, lacks legitimacy:

Disillusionment with the Catholic Church in general now [from myself and others]... from scandal to general oppression that the country suffered from them, there is, generally from the modern generation... wouldn't have that same affinity with the Catholic Church [as older generations may] (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Not only is Niamh's *'them'* quite suggestive of how much she may herself identify with the Church - indeed it could be argued it plays the function of an Other for Niamh and 'the modern generation' - but if moreover negotiations towards the Catholic Church are controlled by understandings of 'scandal to general oppression' it is quite understandable why greater symbolic self-identification is lacking certainly when compared to the evaluations for the Generalised Other.

Niamh's theme of abuse - 'scandal to general oppression' - was a theme consistently followed in a number of other focus groups. When asked about religious feelings, working class students at an interdenominational school responded:

Deirdre – I didn't know the Pope died until yesterday! I swear I didn't know. I heard it.

Rose – I don't believe in anything.

Deirdre – Neither do I like.

Deborah – You must.

Deirdre – Well like when you die there's something but it's not like you're there walking around with friends and stuff it's not like that.

Cathy – I say a prayer before going to sleep, just a prayer like.

Edith – I've no time for them after touching the boys and stuff.

Deborah – That's not right.

(Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Greeley and Ward (2000) may feel that people in Ireland had very little attitudinal change over the 1990s towards general religiosity, the evidence from many young people in the early part of the Twentieth-first century suggests a radical attitudinal change. Though Cathy may 'say a

prayer before going to sleep' she professed no commitment to attending Church or following Roman Catholic theology. Deborah's insistence that other group members 'must' believe in something also makes no reference to beliefs mediated through the customs or beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed Edith and Deborah are immediately critical of the abuse scandals.

The increased space to interrogate Catholicism within Irish society should not be seen as restricted to schools that do not hold an explicit Roman Catholic ethos. Some participants in a middle class school, which of all the schools that participated in this research has unquestionably the most rigidly enforced Roman Catholic ethos, displayed manifest anti-clericalism:

Ray - I hate everything that the Catholic thing stands for its ridiculous.

Eoin - So do I.

Ray - The life of a priest is ridiculous too... And they touch up kids the whole time. It's ridiculous though.

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

Though A1 School celebrates its past - and particularly its strong connection with Irish political and social elite male figures - the centrality of Catholicism is also strongly enforced:

Rory - Like they force Protestants in the school, [they] have to go to mass.

...

Ray - Lad locked himself into the room last year he was a Christian Orthodox guy in boarding school and he's been forced to go to mass. Every single boarder has to go and he won't go... He was made go.

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

Within A1 School the maintenance of an *exclusively* Catholic religious identity is a central ethos within the schooled relationship:

Damien - In [compulsory] confessions the other week the priest asked me if I went to church once a week and I said no. He gave me a minute speech about why I should go to mass. He called me a sinner! Like one of the biggest sins ever. They try and force you to go [to mass] and that's why a lot of people don't go.

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

That Damien, and indeed other students at A1 School, *can* and *do* express views of atheism and religious indifference emphasises how the singular power of a school site completely fails to

reproduce the desired religious ends of A1 School's ethos. This fracturing in socialising religious instruction suggests that the 'ideology of cultural nationalism' (Clancy, 1986:121) - tied to Irishness and Catholicism - principally instituted in post-independent Ireland, has failed. The evidence of A1 School points to an instance of how the schooling environment may have a particular clearly defined and enforced religious ethos that is failing to produce an accepted and practiced outcome. It is an indication of the power of differing socialising sites that young people in A1 School largely resisted attempts to instil a particular mode of religious socialisation.

People within A1 School knew of different religious faith members attending their school - Protestants, Jews and at least one orthodox Christian was mentioned - but some young people highlighted a pernicious trend of exclusion. When asked was there any Protestants in the school, Tom offered:

Tom - Yeah a few but even the teachers are real, 'I don't like Protestants'. I remember last year, he's gone now so I can say it, Mr Smyth, one of the teacher he was all... one of the teachers was going on about Protestants and he was just like completely saying how much he hated them. That doesn't help the students at all.

Eamon - There is a grudge against England in the school definitely.

Jo - Associated with religion, like with English as Protestants?

Eamon - Not purely religion cause like...

Tom - Definitely religion.

Tony - I don't think its religion at all. It's more politics.

Tom - It is [religious].

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

One can understand Tom's attitude that a figure of authority proclaiming he does not like Protestants is hardly constructive for promoting tolerance but perhaps more disturbing is obliging non-Roman Catholic students to attend Roman Catholic religious services. Though A1 School, given its long standing tradition of populating the social elites, may be considered exceptional in the context of Dublin's schooling experience generally, it does point to an instance of how teaching staff may have a particular, clearly defined religious ethos that attempts to impose an identity, though it may be resisted, that reinforces some association between Irish and Catholic.

Though students at A1 School may reject anti-Protestantism it can be seen that the socialisation of inferred *religious difference* is evident from the following exchange:

Tony - I wouldn't care [what religion a person is] I don't think it matters at all what religion you are.

Tom – No it doesn't matter what religion you are for a single person it doesn't matter but for the whole [it matters].

Eamon - In our sailing club like this guy he's one of my best friends I've known him for four years and just before this year here he goes, "Oh I'd love to go to A1 School for my 4<sup>th</sup> year" and I go "Why don't you?" and he goes "Because I'm protestant". I just go "What difference does that make like?" And he goes like it makes a "Huge amount of difference" like.

Tom - My sister goes to a Protestant school and that, it's completely, if she comes home now singing like father Abraham and stuff I don't have a clue about any of that stuff. It doesn't change anything she's completely Catholic they still do everything that Catholics do. That's one thing about our school we don't have any one Protestant, Jewish, all pure Catholic.

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

We can see here that the grouping essentially all profess, to some degree, to national association and religious identity being uncoupled. Interesting, however, is Eamon's friend's feeling that being a Protestant makes a "huge amount of difference" to being able to attend this school. This points towards how some non-Catholics may feel about attending A1 School, with its perceptible and instituted Roman Catholic ethos. Tom obviously touches on the de-ethnicisation of southern Protestant identity when he claims that even though his sister attends a Protestant school 'It doesn't change anything she's completely Catholic they still do everything that Catholics do'. If Tom's 'sister goes to a Protestant school... it doesn't change anything she completely Catholic', what, if any, is the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant, if both 'do' exactly the same? Though some young people from Roman Catholic backgrounds fail to identify any difference between Protestants and Catholics a female student in A5 School, a school with a Church of Ireland ethos, writing about changing a facet of contemporary Ireland clearly understands the privileging of Catholicism:

probably make people more aware of other religions [in Ireland] such as C[hurch]  
O[f] I[reland] and other people who are like atheists etc. (QQ143).

This implies there is both a difference between Catholics and Protestants and that it is not necessarily recognised, certainly for this young person, by Irish society generally, and certainly it is not recognised by Tom. However though young people may not necessarily share an understanding of minority religions in Ireland they do generally share a personal distance from the Catholic Church.

David Tuohy's research, that explored young peoples' attitudes towards religion, found that young people would respond to a question asking if they were a religious person with, "No. I don't go to mass. So, I'm not religious" (2002:204). For Tuohy this showed 'a norm of behaviour that created a boundary to the concept of religious' (ibid). Certainly many of the young people involved in this research can be seen to understand religion within this 'norm of behaviour'. Ryan responded to how powerful religion might be in Irish society with 'No I don't think anyone goes to mass or anything' (Interview conducted Winter 2004). This formal understanding of the Catholic Church, which seems to inform and somewhat encompass young peoples' understanding of religion, places the Catholic Church as failing to address any concerns immediately relevant to young people.

Such an understanding also seems to go beyond 'a norm of behaviour' and positions a 'boundary' to, not simply the concept of religion but to the coupling of religious and national identity. As comprehending religion seems well established through 'a norm of behaviour' - that certainly did not seem adhered to by the majority of young people researched - it is understandable how religion and *the Nation* can be de-coupled. When a group at A4 School were asked if they considered themselves religious they all replied 'no' and went on to express some distance towards religion:

Emma - I don't think religion should be allowed [in school].

Jo – You'se don't associate religion and identity do you?

Kelly – Well no but the older people like [they would].

Emma - We're not unique with religion loads of other countries have the same religion as us.

Sandra - And there are so many different religions in Ireland as well.

Wendy – You don't think about it that much.

Sandra - You don't think about it that much when you think about Irish and religion. If you think of countries you're relate religion to, its Spain, Italy, France.  
(Interview conducted Spring 2005)

Though religion can be marked by Emma emphasising an '*us*' it can be seen that, essentially, the group followed Sandra's lead; they do not 'think about it that much' and if they do consider religion then it is something that may be associated with 'Spain, Italy, France', not necessarily with Ireland. What the above exchange also exposes is how religion can continue to inform identity, if principally, for other people.

Though the above may suggest that religion is detached from understanding Irish identity this is not the case; religion still markedly informs identity. This can be seen directly in Janet's recollection of her primary school experience when the teacher would seek evidence that children had attended weekend mass:

I was in St. John's, it's a Catholic school and think they do have a lot of [different] cultures in there and when we were in sixth class anyway, every Monday the teacher would ask us what the priest said in the gospel on Saturday or Sunday mass like. Be sitting there like and she'd [the teacher] be very angry if you didn't know like. So I mean its [religion] definitely there like.

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

How religion is 'definitely there' and how it can strongly inform identity will be considered in the following section.

### **4.3 How religion informs Irish identity**

The most significant way that religion continues to inform contemporary identity for young people in Dublin is how it serves to emphasise how different contemporary Ireland is to how Ireland is pictured in *the past*. Young people generally like to highlight how modern they regard themselves and employ religion to underline how un-modern Ireland was and how much Ireland, and Irish identity, has changed. This process can be particularly seen in how young people differentiate their own socialising environment when compared to that of their parents. A key theme repeatedly emphasised by young people is that they are growing up in a radically different society to that of their parents. This is well captured by Tony, who was perhaps the most committed to practicing Catholicism from all the focus group participants, when he stated:



I think like Ireland used to be a real religious country and I think we're losing a lot of believers, a lot of believers. Like no one goes, the church is empty, literally empty.

(Interview conducted Winter 2004)

Tony's description of the church as 'literally empty' clearly shows estrangement generally occurred with how people in general - considering the majority of both focus group participants and questionnaire respondents would most likely be *nominally Catholic* - may interact and identify with religion. Tony is still committed to 'a norm of behaviour' - he seems willing to attend mass unlike other young people who had to attend mass because of family demands - but he also sees that 'Dublin's changing... it's not the same'. One of the ways it is 'not the same' is in religious practice, once 'a real religious country' it now has empty Churches for Sunday service, with all that this implies about the place religion holds in Irish society.

Young people, and given O'Connell's opening quote it is a legitimate characterisation, construct a homogeneous pre-Modern Ireland prior to their modern identity. In *the past* Irishness had an implied fixed meaning; it was grounded in a shared dominant bond which had some religious component shared by a substantial majority of the people in Ireland. Being Irish and fixing identity to the Catholic Church is far more problematic for young people in contemporary Ireland when compared to conceptions of Traditional Ireland. As Jane expressed it her parent's 'grew up in a time when it [Ireland] was stricter, more religion, [religion] was a big thing, state schools, Magdalene Laundry going on and all that. When we're the technology era and so on' (Interview conducted Winter 2005). The way young people actively construct contemporary Ireland, and Irish identity, is by placing contemporary Irish identity as socially more open to influences and change than Ireland was in *the past*. This can be seen in how many people project a fixed religious difference between themselves and their parents. Young people perceive the social conditions they themselves are growing up in as radically different to the Ireland that they can commonly project their parents to have grown up in. There is as such a pronounced difference of understanding towards *the Nation of the past* and that of *the present*. Edward from A1 School, in making a distinction between mass attendance for himself and for his parents, highlights how *the Nation* may be experienced and imagined differently:

Back then it was more of a sociable thing [mass attendance]. Like afterwards everyone would stay around and talk but now you just go to mass and go home.

There's more to do these days. Our lives just got so hectic. It doesn't seem like such a hard thing to do to give one hour of your time once a week, for just one hour but we all just seem to hate it. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

*Traditional Ireland* was sociable but *contemporary Ireland* is more 'hectic' and accelerated.

Young peoples' positioning of the Catholic Church and Catholic identity helps to solidify a clear distinction in Irishness. Tom, from A1 School, who professed to be an atheist, when asked about his own sense of Irishness and that of his parents, answered that:

In a way I'd say they're [parents] probably more Irish cause they were made go to mass like. I don't really believe in God anymore now but they do, firmly believe in it, in God you know what I mean? That's cause they were made, they were forced into believing there was God if you don't believe in God you go to hell, now it's more like if you want to go to mass go to mass. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Patrick and Edward also expressed an understanding of social difference when asked how their own and their parents' understanding of Irishness may differ:

Patrick - I wouldn't think it's the same as ours is. We like see ourselves as great craic, I'd say a lot of people, like, religion like growing up in the 70s wouldn't have thought Irish people were great craic. I'm sure they [parents] grew up slightly different.

Edward - It's getting more modernised these days. Not many people go to mass anymore when back in the day you'd have to go otherwise you'd be cast to hell! (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

From the same grouping it can be seen how young peoples' associations with *the past* are viewed as somewhat determined by religion:

Alan - They [parents] were more religious than we were like when they grew up they would have believed in God completely. They'd be worried they'd have to go to mass all the time or else they wouldn't be as faithful as they should be. But with us, I don't go to mass but I don't believe in God but back then no one would think that way, they'd all feel they must go to church.

Paul - Like they felt they had to do it they were brought up tough by parents or nuns or something like that, and they were constantly like the whole way up - God - you have to go to church every week, you should act as a Catholic.

Lee - They were kind of like forced to go like, if you didn't go you were liked shunned! (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

The above shows that young people can typically place a different valuation on the processes of their parents' socialisation than on their own that reinforces the symbolic finding that the *Catholic Church* is more significant for the Generalised Other than for young people generally. Also clearly seen is a picture of the past that speaks of social cohesion applicable to how once attending mass and been seen as religiously faithful, where instilled in people.

Clearly young people can both understand how embedded religious identity may have been - and certainly continues to be for some of their parents - but they can also distance themselves from coupling understandings of national identity with that of religion. Asked about the historical association between Irish identity and Catholicism Janet and Niamh could both see how Irish identity may have been historically formatted but understood any such association as quite separated from how contemporary Irish identity should be valued:

Janet - I suppose I think [yes there was some historic linkage], well not now [contemporary association].

Niamh - That's one of the changes like [in Ireland], no longer, you can't categorise Irishness as Roman Catholic, anymore, cause that's just not the way it is anymore full stop. Because it's not, so I mean yeah, I mean if someone said to me you're not Roman Catholic therefore you're not Irish that would be a bone of contention I don't think you can say that anymore. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

We can see that there is something of an acceptance that a historical linkage existed between Catholic and Irish identity. However the 'I don't think you can say that anymore' as well as pointing to an opening up of Irishness may also point towards what a critic like John Waters might perhaps describe as a limiting controlling instance of Modern Ireland; that even if it was continued to be privately thought that Catholicism and Irishness were bonded it could not be publicly expressed as this is against the project of an inclusive Modern Ireland. However given the absolute dearth of comments within focus groups or from questionnaires actively linking

religious and national identity, one senses that it is not any self-censored ideological hegemony of some inclusive Modern Ireland that prevents coupled expressions of Irishness with Catholicism but rather the accepted operational uncoupling of religion from young peoples' dominant imagination of *the Nation*. Janet's 'I suppose I think, well not now' clearly does show the connection to *the past* but also how religion and national identity are de-coupled in contemporary understandings. It is not simply the recognition that in contemporary Ireland, as Sandra said, 'there are so many different religions in Ireland', but fixing identity to an institution that some people forth-rightly identify as 'touching the boys and stuff' hardly offers a common agreeable positive identification.

Though the extent of the secularisation of Irish society can be disputed it would seem for young people that a consequence of secularisation is seen in how young people adopt a voluntaristic position towards religion juxtaposed to how religion was assumed to have been forced upon people. Luke, for instance, feels his own father's views towards the Church are based on forced religious socialisation; 'My da hates them I think it's because he went to a religious school' (Interview conducted Spring 2005). The over-saturation of religious socialisation leading to a reversal of the desired outcome can be seen within groups - obviously A1 School considered above. The dramatic - negative - impact that parents religious socialisation can have upon the (re)production of relations towards religion is obvious - you have some students experiencing forced attendance while other students are left by their parents to decide if they want to practice religion. Niamh and Janet, like Jane, linked the forced religious socialisation of their parents with how they themselves each may have a choice to accept or reject religious practice:

Janet – Yeah, I think we have a choice now they [parents] didn't have a choice when they were young. You had to go to mass. We have a voice now we can say no you know 'I'm not going'.

Niamh – But I think as a result of that [forced religious socialisation], I think in my family because of that imposing of religion, I think that's why our parents – or a lot of our parents or some of our parents anyway – are giving us choices now and are not imposing religion on us, and I think it's a very very good thing. So I think it should be up to the person themselves to discover their own spirituality

throughout their own life and make their own decisions. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

It can be seen that socialisation occurring in *the past* is considered to continually impress upon contemporary socialisation but not in a fixed and aimed reproductive mode, rather in an open and voluntaristic fashion. This is also seen in young people at A1 School. Though everyone was most probably nominally Catholic in the groups in A1 School - and so may share a religious background with that of their parents - some are coerced to attend mass, like Christopher and Paul, where in Christopher's case 'my parents are real holy and if I didn't go to mass I'd be locked up in my room or something, some horrible thing like that'. These young people at A1 School and young people more generally, demarcated their relationships towards religion to that of distance and voluntarism, believing that faith should be chosen not imposed. Certainly what can emphasise the active de-coupling of religion from Irishness is how young people experience and construct a difference between, not only the past and present but between, rural and urban Ireland.

## 4.4 The Dublin Dynamic

Something of the meeting point between *the past* and *the present* can of course be understood in the fact that some of the young people researched would no doubt have parents or family who would still be religiously active, and this can of course allow some opportunity to suggest a connection between Catholic identity and Irish identity. Janet when characterising the experiential difference between rural Ireland and urban Dublin emphasised religion as one of the essential markers of difference:

very Christian [in the rural community] like you know but up here [Dublin] it's so busy. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Brennan (2001) highlights that on evidence based on mass attendance there is a different level of meanings towards the church in rural and urban Ireland. The rural community, for instance, can still make practical demands upon religious observances, as pointed at by Edward from a situation he encountered:

Like if you didn't go [to mass in rural area] people would be talking about you. And I know lads who are living up in Wicklow and they like missed mass one

Sunday cause we were getting back from a [rugby] game and we got back about 1 o'clock in the afternoon and their parents rang them up and were quite angry with them cause they weren't back for mass. It was more cause they weren't going to be seen and people were going to be talking about them. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Brennan sees, and this is a point shared by Edward, that Church attendance may be different in rural and urban Ireland relating to 'differing patterns of social life in rural and urban communities':

Although it has diminished somewhat, there is still a fairly strong sense of community in rural Ireland in contrast to the atomistic character of the larger towns and cities (2001:81).

A different level of social experience is suggested as occurring between not only rural and urban Ireland but with young peoples' parents and themselves through religious practice. Lee feeling that his parents would 'have to be there [at mass] to be seen' or Edward's feeling that co-students parents would be upset that 'they weren't going to be seen' is intuitively suggestive of Inglis point that 'Being catholic was as much a public as it was a private affair' (1998:68).

Janet and Niamh, who as was shown completely de-linked any notion of Catholicism and Irishness, also each suggested a difference in how religion was and importantly is experienced in rural as against urban Ireland. For the benefit of family and community each actually would involve themselves in religious practice when in a rural settling:

Niamh – And down the country [people would be more religious].

Janet – Yeah down the country [more religious] and we'd get it from them [religious identity]. Like I'm not particularly religious but I'd get things from my nanny you know? My friend was wearing rosary beads around her neck the other day and I nearly died it wasn't me that cared it was just my nanny used to do it. I think when they all go [older people] it will die in all of us as well, its deteriorating like [...] when I go down [the country] I have to go to mass, if I go down with my Da, and we're not religious at all like, we wouldn't go near a church here [in Dublin] at all but when we go down [the country] all the relatives are going in you have to go like. Not to go only on a Sunday [would be an issue],

sometimes you have special days on a Wednesday [and] you have to go like.  
(Interview conducted Winter 2005)

This was a point reiterated later by Janet when asked again about feelings of being compelled to attend religious service; ‘In Galway [I would go to mass] but not here [in Dublin]... no sure no one would care you don’t know your neighbours here [in Dublin] like’. Niamh, who is as we have seen spiritually reflexive, suggests that ‘when you go down the country whenever you do actually hear mass, big thing Sunday mass, it’s where people meet, all that kind of thing’. It can be seen that Niamh also suggests the ‘sociable thing’ offered by Edward in distinguishing how Mass may have been engaged with in *the past* and how it is engaged with in *the present*. Certainly for Niamh, and this point will be further considered when discussing Irish Rurality in a later chapter, a religious cleavage is presented to exist between urban and rural Ireland and that outside of Dublin Irish identity could be differently experienced:

Niamh - The whole religion thing the whole very very Catholic [in rural Ireland].  
You know the whole Irish Catholic kind of thing that’s very big down the country  
[but not in Dublin].

We also saw above with Janet that her, and her father’s, attendance at Sunday mass if in Galway was also motivated by sociality and probably ‘know[ing] your neighbours’ in Galway but not in Dublin. These experiences highlight the socialisation patterns followed as consequences of family experiences but also a marked distinction between notions of rural and urban *community*. Taking a broad view of the Generalised Other - to include Rural Ireland - it can certainly be read that Catholic identity is firmly embedded with how the Generalised Other may understand Irishness as ‘very very Catholic’ for Niamh.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Samuel Huntington describes Catholicism as ‘essential’ to Irish identity (2004:365). However how young Irish people position their own self-conception of identity suggests that Catholicism is, if anything, largely unnecessary to their own valued understanding of Irishness. Young people certainly consider themselves Irish but they do not suggest Catholicism is ‘essential’ constitute of how they prize identity. White highlights how social changes have impacted upon religious practices and identities in Ireland:

In the Irish case the arrival of cafeteria Catholicism, personally selecting those items on the menu of Catholic faith one wishes to believe, threatens to unravel the historical fusion of Catholic and national identity. The Irish continue to be dedicated to Catholicism as a badge of national identity, but a consumer orientation to the religious world undermines the Church's capacity to shape individual values (2006:253).

The situation for these young people when researched - so not necessarily the attitudes these people now hold or attitudes that may be held in the future - is not even readily suggestive of any commitment towards a 'cafeteria Catholicism'. The idea of 'Catholicism as a badge of national identity' does not necessarily fit easily with how many young people articulate their own understandings of Irish identity. Though a slender majority of young people may offer some symbolic attachment towards the *Catholic Church* it appears that linking religious identity as a popular expression that securely connects to Irish identity is strongly avoided, particularly when young people are questioned in focus groups.

There is essentially a distance from any religious identity coupled with any personalised marking of national identity where even the questionnaire comments offered scant coverage of any positive mention of religion or religious identity connecting to Irishness. Regarding Catholic identity what can be seen is that young people do not seem to see it as some necessary condition to being Irish. This does suggest there is a pluralist space within conceptualisations of being Irish. The privileged place that Catholicism once enjoyed within Irish identity is de-privileged by young people and what predominantly marks Irish identity for these young people are conceptualisations of a modern and in many respects a post-religious Ireland. Young people do not see themselves as religious, they generally do not seem to attend mass and seem to treat religion as outside of who they are and indeed in many cases something to be avoided. It is difficult to accept that Catholic identity will - without the effort of changing to connect or reflect more so with an Irish identity young people may identify with - even greatly mark Irishness in the future 'as a badge of national identity'.

Brennan's assessment of the religious beliefs circulating within Irish society, based upon in-depth interviewing of five young people, somewhat approaches how the young people involved in this project engaged with religion:



When one considers that until a generation ago the influence of the Catholic Church permeated Irish society, it is not surprising that a residue of Catholic belief and practice, as well as an openness to the spiritual dimension of life, is an inherent part of these young lives (2001:122).

The idea of ‘a residue of Catholic belief and practice’ still characterises views held towards the Generalised Other and clearly a majority of young people symbolically identified with the *Catholic Church*. However though the Generalised Other is certainly privileged in associating religion with a sense of Irish identity it is typically a relationship that can be constructed not necessarily around widespread shared meaning but rather having meaning in particular pockets in Ireland, like in Northern Ireland or with the importance of how mass attendance can be viewed within Rural Ireland. Perhaps nothing better symbolises how young people negotiate religion than the experience of A1 School. Here is a school site absolutely welded to the notion of Catholic Ireland - even at least one teacher was noted for making anti-Protestant remarks - but yet the majority of students make little personal connections between their sense of Irish identity and that of religion.

The formalisation of religious identity into the needed practising of religion - the need to attend Mass to be religious for instance - ensures that the opportunity to connect Irishness with Catholicism on this level of practice is largely absent for many young people. People may be baptised Catholic, undertake Confession and Communion ceremonies - so this may have some affect upon symbolic identification - but the seemingly widespread non-attendance of mass reinforces a de-coupling of religious and Irish identity, and importantly seeming to remove religious identity from saying anything of significance about Irish identity. Young peoples’ relations, however, to religion are not solely formed by how they formally engage with religion - for instance if *all* the people involved in this research started attending Mass they would not somehow mechanically develop a strong connecting sense of Irishness through religion. The process of secularisation and pluralism has also affected young peoples’ attitudes towards identity and just as in wider Irish society, religion is not as valued as it may once have been, which is reflected by young people themselves.

The place of religion in Irish society may remain, to quote Janet’s, ‘definitely there’ but in another sense religion is most definitely not there. Both the definitely there/not there is touched on by Tom when he claims that even though his sister attends a Protestant school ‘It

doesn't change anything'. Tom, an atheist, can mark a distinction between Protestant and Catholic but he can actively remove any religious distinction between Protestant and Catholic. Religion can still matter, which is illustrated by the young person who would like to make 'people more aware of other religions' but it does not necessarily matter for a great many young people in how they may positively construct Irishness. Catholicism can be allowed to hold some association with Irishness but it cannot, for young people, be allowed to define Irishness in any substantive manner.

This chapter has shown how a dominant historically constitutive feature of Irish identity has generally failed to offer a commonly embraced, shared and accepted understanding of Irish identity for the young people who participated in this research. Though Catholicism may still continue to hold some symbolic presence within and around Irishness, it is extremely difficult to maintain that it presents any encompassing and *the defining* understanding of Irishness, or that they somewhat continue to work to help maintain and support any particularly shared or accepted understanding of Irish identity for many young people. The next chapter will consider the place of the Irish language, which, along with notions of Catholic, has historically enjoyed a privileged connection to Irishness.

# Chapter 5

## The Irish Language and Irish Identity

A common language has often proved an effective organisational instrument for developing a shared sense of national identity; a distinct language has frequently been employed by nationalists to develop some shared picturing of the Nation. Balthazar's analysis of *The Faces of Quebec Nationalism* highlights how the French language works to shape some meaning of identity in Quebec, pointing at 'the preservation of a francophone nation in North America' as a connecting theme between what he terms the 'new nationalism' and 'the traditional French-Canadian ideology' (1993:97). Though the articulation of Quebec national sentiments may differ in expression between the 'traditional' and 'new' perspectives it is held together by using a common language as the foundation upon which Quebecan national difference is emphasised. Obviously being a French speaking society in predominantly English speaking North America affords a distinctiveness to identity that can only be reinforced through the practise of everyday speech but just as 'a francophone nation in North America' can be operationalised to highlight the linguistic distinctiveness of Quebecan national identity, the usage of the Irish language was indisputably historically employed to emphasise the uniqueness of a Gaelic Irish identity in a predominantly English speaking British Isles.

In Ireland, starting in the late nineteenth century, the Irish language 'became an important element in the symbolic inventory of nationalists' (McCoy and Scott, 2000:8) in their attempts to encourage a particular distinctive sense of the Irish Nation from that of Britain. Irish nationalists' emphasis upon having a different, or native language, helped establish a sense of the Irish nation's cultural distinctiveness from Britishness and certainly helped mobilise feelings towards British colonial rule and the picture of a post-colonial Ireland. Though one cannot assume that what may have been an influential identity marking in the past is transferred to the present, there

can be little doubt that the Irish language has helped shaped some understandings of what it is to be Irish.

This chapter will consider relationships towards the Irish language and how the Irish language may or may not continue to mark understandings of Irish identity for young people. The chapter will look at the personal symbolic valuation given to both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* and the perceived values given for the Generalised Other. Though the symbolic analysis will show young people identifying with the *Irish language*, and so some importance must certainly be attached to it, and also how some young people in their questionnaire comments unproblematically underline the significance of the language, the theme of this chapter will be to show how deeply contested and uneven the Irish language is in marking Irish identity for young people. McCoy and Scott recognize two differing approaches or ‘images’ towards the Irish language in Ireland; ‘as a dreary, irrelevant subject forced upon reluctant schoolchildren; or as a proud symbol of Irish nationhood’ (2000:6). These two ‘images’ are readily found within the sample. It will not only be seen that symbolic identification is deeply fractured by class and gender but even more importantly when addressed in focus groups young people often thoroughly distance the Irish language from their personal understandings of Irishness. It will be show how negotiations of the Irish language are often undertaken through a utilitarian principle that fundamentally questions the importance of the language and the impression it can make upon Irish identity. In trying to explain why there is symbolic celebration of the language compared against some practical distance from the Irish language, this chapter will highlight how young people approach the Irish language in a functional manner. Young people actively negotiate identity and the factors that may determine one particular view towards the Irish language can change under a different context. We will see how this functional approach works in the section below on Utilitarianism of Language Use. We will begin this chapter by measuring the symbolic significance that young people place in both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language*.

## 5.1 Symbolic identifications towards the Irish language

Though the Irish language is not heard at a conversational level in most peoples' social environments in Ireland the questionnaire results show that at a personal symbolic level the *Irish language* and even *Speaking the Irish language* remains firmly established within personal conceptions of Irishness:

**Table 5.1 - Personal symbolic significance of the Irish Language and Speaking the Irish language**

Symbols of Irishness	Very important	Important	Not important
Irish Language	41.8% (N=137)	29% (N=95)	28.7% (N=94)
Speaking the Irish language	29.8% (N=97)	28.9% (N=94)	40% (N=130)

Mac Gréil finding towards the Irish language in *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited* highlighted 'a highly favourable disposition towards the language as indicated by the 94% who would wish to see it preserved or revived' (1996:114). It is clear that a majority of the sample symbolically retain a 'favourable disposition' towards both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language*. Some 41.8% (N=137) of young people who addressed the question ranked the *Irish language* as personally *Very Important*; 29% (N=95) marked it as *Important*; and 28.7% (N=94) marked it as *Not Important* in personally connecting to their own understanding of Irishness. Though none of the schools that participated in the questionnaire were Gaelscoileanna it can be seen that a clear majority of the sample - 70.8% (N=232) - identify the *Irish language* as having some symbolic meaning in marking Irish identity. However we can also witness the relevance of McCoy and Scott's two differing 'images' of the language, when over a quarter of those sampled hold that the *Irish language* is *Not Important* for their own understanding of Irishness.

The conflicting 'images' of the Irish language can perhaps be appreciated more clearly in the notional commitment to *Speaking the Irish language*, as this is clearly not as pronounced as the symbolic association towards the *Irish language* itself. Though a majority of 58.7% (N=191) view *Speaking the Irish language* as either personally *Very Important* or *Important* - so implying a value in the usage of the language beyond the merely implied *symbolic presence* to perhaps the

*symbolically practiced* – there is a difference of over ten percent between *Speaking the Irish language* and the *Irish language*. Similarly the figure for those who find no symbolic importance in the *Irish language* at 28.7% (N=94) increases to 40% (N=130) in relation to those who find no symbolic importance in *Speaking the Irish language*. This obviously suggests that symbolic identification towards the *Irish language* makes a far lesser demand upon self-identity than the more challenging notion of *Speaking the Irish language*.

Young people obviously have differing symbolic viewpoints and when the results are examined in greater detail it is seen that, in general, symbolic support is tied to gender and class:

**Table 5.2 - Class/Gender breakdown of personal symbolic attachment to the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language*<sup>2</sup>**

Symbols of Irishness	Very Important	Important	Not Important
<i>Irish language</i>			
Male working class	39.5% (N=45)	28% (N=32)	31.6% (N=36)
Female working class	52.8% (N=66)	28% (N=35)	18.4% (N=23)
Male middle class	13.3% (N=4)	46.7% (N=14)	40% (N=12)
Female middle class	37.3% (N=22)	23.7% (N=14)	40% (N=23)
<i>Speaking the Irish language</i>			
Male working class	30.3% (N=34)	29.5% (N=33)	38.4% (N=43)
Female working class	37.4% (N=46)	26.8% (N=33)	34.9% (N=43)
Male middle class	9.7% (N=3)	25.8% (N=8)	64.5% (N=20)
Female middle class	23.7% (N=14)	33.9% (N=20)	40.7% (N=24)

Females, in general, hold a stronger personal attachment to the *Irish language* and it is working class females, from all cohorts, who hold the strongest attachment to the *Irish language*. The group most disengaged from symbolically associating any sense of identity with the *Irish language* is young middle class males; with only 13.3% (N=4) holding a *Very Important* symbolic placement of the *Irish language* and 40% (N=12) feeling that the *Irish language* is *Not Important* as a personal symbolic marker of Irishness.

The viewpoints towards the *Irish language* are somewhat repeated when we examine the symbolical importance young people place in *Speaking the Irish language*. Again working class

<sup>2</sup> R value of .002 for Personal symbolic attachment to the *Irish language* based upon Class, and R value of .001 for Personal symbolic attachment to the *Irish language* based upon Gender. R value of .018 for Personal symbolic attachment to *Speaking the Irish language* based upon Class, and R value of .042 for Personal symbolic attachment to *Speaking the Irish language* based upon Gender.

females are the most symbolically committed from all cohorts and once again it is middle class males who placed the least symbolic importance upon *Speaking the Irish language*. The difference between the general symbolisation of the *Irish language* compared to *Speaking the Irish language* as *Not Important* is noteworthy for it suggests that it is perhaps the simple existence of the Irish language which is important rather than any personal commitment to actually being or becoming proficient in the language. When 31.6% (N=36) of young working class males find the *Irish language* symbolically *Not Important* it can be seen that this figure increases to 38.4% (N=43) who find that *Speaking the Irish language* is symbolically *Not Important*. Even working class females, the cohort most symbolically commitment to the *Irish language*, can be seen differentiating their own personal symbolic commitment towards *Speaking the Irish language*. When 18.4% (N=23) of young working class females consider the *Irish language* symbolically *Not Important* it is seen that this figure nearly doubles to 34.9% (N=43) who find that *Speaking the Irish language* is *Not Important*. These figures indicate something of a reversal of Mac Gréil findings on who is most supportive of the Irish language, particularly with regard to class. Regarding Mac Gréil question that *The Irish language should be discarded and forgotten*, his results showed 16% agreeing from Skilled/Routine Non-manual and Unskilled/Semi-skilled background while only 7% from a Professional/Executive and Inspector/Supervisor agreed with the statement (1996:108). Mac Gréil found that a positive disposition to the language was connected to occupational backgrounds and higher educational attainment. This Dublin sample obviously shows that those now most symbolically favourable are not people from middle class backgrounds but rather young people from working class backgrounds.

Though there is some disjuncture between attitudes towards the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* the analysis fundamentally demonstrates a generally positive symbolic attachment to both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* for most young people. These symbolic associations would seem to imply that ‘there is a strong emotional interface between language and identity’ (Carmichael, 2000:285).

### 5.1.1 The Generalised Other and the Irish language

Though there is a difference between the symbolisation of the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* in young people's personal meanings towards Irish identity, there is seen to be a greater shared agreement on the heightened position of both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* as projected onto their evaluations of the Generalised Other:

**Table 5.3 - Symbolic Importance of the Irish language and Speaking the Irish language as projected onto the Generalised Other**

Symbols of Irishness	Very important	Important	Not important
Irish language	40.4% (N=131)	36.4% (N=118)	22.8% (N=74)
Speaking the Irish language	27.2% (N=88)	35.5% (N=115)	36.1% (N=117)

As with the symbolic marking towards the *Catholic Church* young people project comparative greater symbolic identificatory power onto the Generalised Other in relation to both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language*. We saw above that 70.8% (N=232) of the sample identified the *Irish language* as personally either *Very Important* or *Important* which compares to the projected evaluation of 76.8% (N=249) of the Generalised Other who are deemed to symbolically regard the *Irish language* as either *Very Important* or *Important*. When 28.7% (N=94) of young people valued the *Irish language* as *Not Important* this figure is reduced to 22.8% (N=74) for the evaluation of the Generalised Other. Similarly when 40% (N=130) of young people highlight that *Speaking the Irish language* is *Not Important* the figure is reduced to 36.1% (N=117) for the value placed upon the Generalised Other. As with the symbolic association towards the *Catholic Church* and Irish identity young people project the Generalised Other as valuing particular symbols of identification more than they do personally.

It was shown above that class and gender acutely affect symbolic evaluation and it can also be seen that these features shape views towards the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* that are held towards the Generalised Other:



**Table 5.4 Class/Gender breakdown of the Generalised Other's symbolic attachment to the Irish language and Speaking the Irish language<sup>3</sup>**

Symbols of Irishness	Very Important	Important	Not Important
<i>Irish language</i>			
Male working class	44% (N=48)	34.9% (N=38)	21.1% (N=23)
Female working class	41.6% (N=52)	36% (N=45)	21.6% (N=27)
Male middle class	26.7% (N=8)	43.3% (N=13)	30% (N=9)
Female middle class	38.3% (N=23)	36.7% (N=22)	25% (N=15)
<i>Speaking the Irish language</i>			
Male working class	30.3% (N=33)	35.8% (N=39)	33% (N=36)
Female working class	27.4% (N=34)	35.5% (N=44)	36.3% (N=45)
Male middle class	22.6% (N=7)	25.8% (N=8)	48.4% (N=15)
Female middle class	23.3% (N=14)	40% (N=24)	35% (N=21)

With the notable exception of working class females' the comparative views towards the *Irish language* shows that all other cohorts clearly symbolically regard the Generalised Other as holding a higher valuation in the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* than young people do themselves.

Young peoples' engagement with both the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* is, like that of the symbolic marking of the *Catholic Church*, clearly affected by class and gender. Though there is certainly symbolic attachment towards the language it is clearly a long way from Mac Gréil findings of 'practically universal attachment to Irish among the population' (1996:107). In the following section we shall attempt to give a more rounded picture of both how these factors can shape engagements towards the Irish language but more importantly try to present the negotiated impression that the Irish language has upon Irish identity for young people in Dublin.

<sup>3</sup> R value of .104 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to the Irish language based upon Class, and R value of .001 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to the Irish language based upon Gender. R value of .291 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to Speaking the Irish language based upon Class, and R value of .005 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to Speaking the Irish language based upon Gender.

## 5.2 Beyond the Symbolic Association of the Irish language

Michel Peillon, writing in the early 1980s, identified a view towards the treatment of the Irish language that he felt ‘goes deep’ into shaping particular symbolic attitudes towards the language:

London fashions never take long to reach Dublin, and English pop stars and football teams attract a large following in Ireland. This widespread assimilation of English culture, especially among the younger generation, made possible by the predominance of the English language, has attained the dimension of almost total anglicisation. In this situation, the Irish language has come to symbolise resistance to the levelling influence of English mass culture (1982:101).

London and England may remain important cultural sites for identity construction but substituting *America* for London or *globalisation* for anglicisation would completely contemporise Peillon’s observation and how ‘resistance’ can shape identity for some young people in Dublin. Unquestionably some people do symbolically celebrate the Irish language as ‘resistance’ to a projected homogenisation of global culture - typically read as American - that can mark Irishness as distinct from other national identities. The Irish language, and the usage of language, can act as a symbolic defence against impending cultural homogenisation or cultural extinction, expressed here by two students:

keep the language, keep the music and don’t get caught up in this industrialised world where nothing but money matters (QQ126).

The Irish language [is important] because it’s our native language (QQ253)

Young people can actively engage with the notion of a changing Irish identity and the Irish language can be seen for some to act as an anchoring of identity by being a defence that underlines and distinguishes Irish identity. If the Irish language can be seen as fixing identity to something unproblematically representing Irishness then this theme of a response to a cultural threat can be seen in a number of comments:

The Irish language [is important in Irish identity], because we have already lost so much of our culture and this would regain some of it (QQ28).

[We have] To keep our heritage alive and to keep the Irish language going (QQ304).

The Irish language can quite obviously ‘symbolise resistance’ in the sense of a homogenising world but it can also symbolise something of an organically nationalised world-view, certainly according to Desmond Fennell:

The essential difference, “linguistically”, between Gaelic Ireland centuries ago and English-speaking Ireland today is not that the former spoke Gaelic and the latter speaks English... The essential difference is, rather, that Gaelic Ireland had an Irish world-image achieved by its own mind, and therefore spoke a language of its own about the world, whereas we lack an Irish world-image and consequently see the world and our life through a borrowed image, and speak about them in the language of that image. (We use the Anglo-American world-image and discourse, transmitted to us from the capitalist power-centres of London and New York-Washington). (1983:124).

Moving beyond symbolic identification, which is obviously still there, it can be seen that some questionnaire comments show that the Irish language is often fore-fronted in the consciousness of many young people towards their conceptualisation of Irishness. The young people researched may not have been educated in ‘Gaelic Ireland’ with any particular Gaelic ‘Irish world-image’ but it is evident that certain young people show some sympathy for the development of a ‘Gaelic Ireland’. Some young people’s conceptualisation of the Irish language is linked to a responsibility, in some cases enforced, to establish a more Irish speaking society imbued with a sense of national belonging that categorically differentiates Irishness - through Irish language use - from other nationalities. The questionnaire asked if given *the power to change one thing about Irish society, what would you change and why?* Just over four per cent (4.2%) of respondents directly pointed at improving the penetration of the Irish language within Irish society as something they would address if given the power. From the questionnaire responses below it can be seen how emotional some youth people are about the language:

[I] would create more Irish speaking society and make it compulsory for secondary kids to go once a year (QQ83)

I think people should speak the Irish language (QQ130)

I think that the Irish language should be more publicised and that people should have to speak more than just in school (QQ137)

I think the Irish language needs to be spoken all over Ireland as we're Irish not English!!! (QQ138)

I just feel it is a disgrace if you can't talk your native language fluently and I think the government should provide more incentives to learn the beautiful Irish language (QQ202)

Speak your native language when possible and represent (QQ200)

More people speak Irish (QQ218)

I would make Irish the main spoken language because less and less people are speaking it (QQ227).

make more Irish schools to keep our Irish language alive (QQ244)

I would change the language from English to Irish... we should be able to speak Irish all the time (QQ273).

the language should be Irish because this is the language of my country (QQ280).

The Irish language, for some young people, still shares and confirms an Irish identity, as can be seen from these comments, and many comments directly correlate the usage of the Irish language to that of identity. However these positive attitudes towards the language must be qualified.

Peillon rightly identifies a 'contradiction' on the part of many people in Ireland towards the Irish language, whereby there is both 'widespread support for the Irish language and the unwillingness to translate this support into deeds' (1982:102). Certainly the symbolic analysis above would seem to validate Peillon's claim. Some young people can be highly sympathetic - not only symbolically - to the language but show a distinct disliking for how the language is taught and so dismiss themselves from efforts to speak in Irish, thus essentially dismissing the language from fundamentally marking identity:

Eamon - You'd like to speak it but you don't want to go and learn it.

Martin - If you were brought up on it and knew it you'd probably like it a lot more than you would. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Eamon and Martin do have sympathy for the language but show 'unwillingness to translate this support into deeds'. The formality of learning the language can be seen when, according to Eamon, the Irish language is 'such a hard language to learn'. Ray also feels this but he also feels that the encouragement of the language is not supported when it is 'taught so badly' in schools. Formalising the position of the Irish language in the school curriculum will not - and obviously

does not - encourage the widespread common usage of Irish in Dublin, a position highlighted by Eagleton in post-independent Ireland where 'Many children who were forced to learn it at school find it a tedious chore and forgot it as soon as they could, along with equilateral triangle and de Valera's birth date' (1999:83). Even the radical suggestion of 'create[ing a] more Irish speaking society and make it compulsory for secondary kids to go once a year' (QQ83) could only be accepted by Ray and Tom, if the schools can be mixed.

Tom, who marks himself proficient in the Irish language - 'I'd be almost fluent. I went to Irish college a lot, so I'd be almost fluent and when I was living Galway it was in an Irish-speaking place' - persists in somewhat resisting the learning of Irish in formalised schooled surroundings. A group from A3 School also expressed similar views:

Peter - It's not taught well it's always been a boring subject, and then when you're asked to speak it you automatically think of the boredom of sitting in Irish class.

Sean - Speak Irish I fall asleep.

Barry - I think the fact that we've been learning French for six years and Irish for about twelve or thirteen years - yeah it's been fourteen years been learning Irish - and you know so much more French after six years than you do Irish after thirteen fourteen years. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Barry does highlight an issue that seems pertinent and goes to the heart of the perception of learning the Irish language. Young people can clearly judge the value of any language not against any feelings of identity but against feelings of utility and language ability. There is then quite obviously some evaluation of the Irish language that can step outside it's meaning towards Irish identity and thoroughly question the place of the Irish language in school and Irish society. Even those who showed sympathy towards the language felt it should be encouraged at an earlier age as otherwise by secondary level, the Irish language takes on a quality of being imposed upon people:

Jean - I don't know like but you should be speaking Irish, like English, from the time you're like two or something.

Esther - Cause then you'd have to learn English when you go into school so you could have it for when you go on holidays or something, for going to different countries. But that would be harder though.

Jean - But you be able to learn both.

Jane - When you're young, kids can pick up so many different languages.

Ciara - One of my teachers in my old school her daughter could speak three languages and she was only 5 - she could speak French, English and Irish and was learning German. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Pauline, from another group, also felt that:

If they started young, learning it, from kids, then it would be we'd be speaking more, you can't teach us now.

Young people make the legitimate assumption that instilling some ability in the Irish language at a young age would greatly encourage, if not its usage in later years, certainly a greater receptivity towards the Irish language. However the above comments also highlight excuses as to why the Irish language is not commonly spoken in Ireland and can be seen, in some regard, as justifying why young people often dismiss the learning of Irish. Though there is an underlying support towards the language in the above suggestions it is a functional support. There is some understanding that familiarity with more than one language allows for further language acquisitions in later years.

In Ireland, for the overwhelming majority of people, their first experience of the Irish language is in schools. The absence of promoting the Irish language at a very young age would seem to ensure that the language is perceived as educationally formalised and attached to a sense of Irishness in, at best, this formal way. Sean's response to the suggestion of enforcing the Irish language captures this formality:

It seems like they [young people who support forcing people to attend one-year Irish schools] don't want to speak Irish but let's anyway - it's kind of like we kind of have to. It seems more obligatory. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

The formalisation of the language ensures that general perceptions of the Irish language are grounded in detachment. Pauline's, 'you can't teach us now', points at how some young people engage with a language but also allows some young people to legitimately disengage from learning Irish - it is unlearnable. Though these comments are something of a mixture of positive and negative feelings towards the Irish language the following section will show that young people can challenge any privileged positioning of the Irish language. When young people are directly questioned about the language in any depth a far more nuanced understanding of the Irish language as an expression of Irish identity is presented.

## 5.3 Contesting the Importance of the Irish language

As was seen in the symbolic analysis young people far from evenly experience how the Irish language may affect Irish identity. Even the cohort most symbolically committed to the *Irish language* and *Speaking the Irish language* - young working class females - can be internally divided over the significance of the Irish language. Considering a sample of questionnaire comments from C7 School - an all-female working class school - an evident division is seen over the place of the Irish language:

[Change] learning the Irish language [in school] (QQ302)

We're always ranting raving about being Irish but we can't even speak our native language properly. I feel Irish language is very important (QQ303)

keep the Irish language going (QQ304)

the Irish language shouldn't be compulsory (QQ307)

I don't think we should have to study Irish – it should be optional (QQ308)

the Irish language shouldn't be compulsory and only for girls [and I would assume boys] who actually enjoy learning it (QQ311)

to keep up the Irish language!! (QQ312)

While some young people emphasise the fundamental importance of the language others clearly challenge this.

It was shown above that some people suggested improving the penetration of the language in Irish society but all groups treated this suggestion quite uniformly; nearly all young people preferred to remain English speaking. However questionnaire comments and symbolic association do point to self-identification towards the *Irish language* and language can certainly be seen to endow an identity for some young people. Elaine from C1 School saw in the Irish language a badge of identity and Chris appears to have internalised the nationalist meaning of the Irish language when he commented that 'speaking Irish that's like important anyway'. Chris's 'important anyway' is reminiscent of 'The spiritual thing' offered by Pearse, where nationality is located 'chiefly in language'. Jane, from A4 School was one of the very few focus group participants who seemed very committed to the Irish language - a family member is attending an Irish speaking school and some effort to speak Irish is made in the home - and it can be seen that Jane accepts an explicit linkage between language and a distinctive Irish identity:

[Irishness is] Something to be proud of because Ireland is the only country that speaks Irish, and lots of other countries have like French, that are not located in France. Irish is Irish unique in itself. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

The enabling distinctiveness of the Irish language - 'Ireland is the only country that speaks Irish' - promotes a sense of pride and national distinctiveness for Jane. Ray, who like Jane was sympathetic towards the Irish language, picked up on the symbolic position of the Irish language against its actual usage within Irish society:

Yeah the EU said it was us and what's the other country, what's the smallest country in Europe?... Yeah Luxembourg have a language and they use it as much as we do use Irish, and they [EU] said that they aren't accepting that that's their national language until we start using it, that came in last week and so English is our national language.

Though the EU may or may not insist that 'English is our national language' it should be noted that Ray could appreciate the discursive difference between the formalised place of the Irish language against the reality of English language usage in Ireland. This was a theme emphasised by young people when challenging Jane's correlation of language and a sense of identity:

Jane - It's [the Irish language] what makes us Irish.

Esther - Yeah but we don't speak it. Even when we're in the country [outside Dublin] we don't speak it. We speak English and they respond to English.

Jane - That's not the point it's Irish it's our language.

Mary - What's the point in having it if you don't speak it?

Jane - I don't like the language but it's still Irish it's still our language. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Considering that Jane does actually make efforts to 'speak it' in her home environment we can get some appreciation of how failing to speak the Irish language can remove the language as a significant way of understanding Irish identity for many young people. There is also some similarity with how young people in C1 School engaged with the Irish language. Asked if speaking the Irish language would make them feel *more Irish* - the idea of Fennell's 'Irish world-image' - some in the group responded:

Fiona - Yeah definitely.



Elaine – I don't I hate that, it's useless. When you leave school will you ever use it?

Hazel – Need it for the Guards.

Connie – Why do you need Irish for Guards we speak English? (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

It can be seen that one participant in both groups saw a profound sense of identity in the language. However the overall theme within the groups when responding to the identificatory importance that Jane and Fiona placed in the language was through a utilitarian approach towards language use which highlights the distance the Irish language has in offering a sense of identity. Connie was genuinely surprised that the Irish language would be a requirement for the Gardaí, and like Ray, fully understands that 'English is our national language' irrespective of how symbolically formalised relationships are presented.

There is no doubt great divergence between the positive symbolic celebrations of the language on the one hand and the negativity attached to the language in focus groups on the other. Peillon writes that:

The symbolic use of the language on official and State occasions is considered to be a sufficient expression of national identity (Peillon, 1982:102).

Peillon's 'sufficient expression' is seen not only in the symbolic association of the *Irish Language* compared to the implied practice of *Speaking the Irish language* but it also can be seen in the reaction from one of the groups in A4 School when Jane attaches so much national identity capital to the Irish language:

Clare - It's really not that much spoken.

Jane - Yeah I know but it's still unique there is only that one language.

Jo - But the same applies to Scotland, Wales.

Ciara - Yeah like there was those, each other, it's not totally unique.

Suzanne - Yeah well a lot of people complain about doing Irish in school cause its not, a lot of people complain about it, there's no point.

Jane - You need it for college.

Ciara - Yeah but you're not going to use it after.

Esther - The only craic of it is Irish College. The only fun of it is Irish College.

...

Nora - When you get out of school you never use it again. You totally forget it like.

Jo - Then why do you think you are been taught Irish?

Mary - Cause you need it to get into college. And you need it for the points in your Leaving Cert.

Esther - It's pointless.

Jane - Cause it's our national language... in some college you do [need Irish] and in some colleges you don't. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

It can be seen that all students except Jane symbolically disassociated their personal sense of national identity from the Irish language and return to the everyday usefulness and penetration of the Irish language.

The symbolic distinction and aspirational desire to speak the Irish language has generally marked the language as a distinct symbolic marker of Irishness - most obviously in Northern Ireland where the Irish language continues to be an overt political statement of identity (Barbour, 2000). The changed and changing social processes in Dublin and Ireland may suggest that other symbols of identity are more important for *being Irish* than the Irish language. Niamh, from A3 School, points at how the Irish language may have served a particular historical purpose but that this historical reason may have passed from importance in contemporary Ireland:

I think though it's turned into such a negative thing, the Irish language. Like cause Irish it's imposed, they [young people] don't want to do it so it gets nowhere, kind of defeats the whole purpose. I mean saying I done history and looking at the whole thing of the cultural nationalist movement and about the Gaelic League and it was so important back then and they were saying we have to keep this language alive, it makes us who we are, but the thing is it never took off and its clutching on to something from the past and is going nowhere. The numbers in the Gaeltacht, Irish speaking people, are quickly declining. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Niamh is pointing towards a re-evaluation of those nationalising symbols of *the past* and for a reconsideration of their place in contemporary Ireland. It can be seen that Niamh understands that the Irish language - somewhat understood through Fennell's 'world-image' - may have had a historical place in developing a national consciousness but that contemporary circumstances - 'its

clutching on to something from the past and is going nowhere' - place the Irish language as very remote from her understanding of contemporary Irish identity.

Perhaps it is Niamh who most completely represents the general views of young people towards the Irish language:

[Irish language] gets really negative responses. The [Irish] subject in general; really really negative opinions, waste of space; stupid language; dead language; waste of time; why are we doing this never going to use this in my life completely totally. If it would have been in the past instilled that we were speaking our own native tongue that would have been brilliant but now as I say just clutching on to something in the past.

Niamh's reflections encompass several of the views replicated in many young peoples' negotiations of the Irish language. In Niamh one can see both the predominant views of negativity towards the language but also how the Irish language can still act to positively mark understandings of Irishness, with the idea that if 'we were speaking our own native tongue that would have been brilliant'.

Niamh's understanding reflects the past tense as do many other young peoples' relationship to the Irish language. Jill pointed towards people's aspiration to speak Irish but she also pointed, more decisively, towards people who 'don't actually make the effort to speak [but claim it's important] so its like for the kids. They force it [Irish] but it's all well for the adults to speak it - keep the culture alive - but it's not them that has to do it. It's us who have to be doing exams in Irish and stuff'. That people are not 'speaking our own native tongue' or not making 'the effort to speak it' is fully realised by young people who in effect hold a utilitarian view towards the Irish language marking identity.

Barry, also from A3 School like Niamh and Jill, goes to the root of the constructed nature of language and how he feels this can impact upon Irish identity:

If you have to force a language onto the country to form some type of identity, the identity isn't there to be made you know what I mean? There's either an Irish identity or there isn't you can't make one by forcing a language... It would be more useful to learn a second European language instead of learning what is basically the new Latin.

Though the Irish language may offer - symbolically - a sense of Irishness is it not necessarily tied to how Barry or Niamh view their own understanding of Irishness.

Being educated in an English speaking school in Dublin is no doubt going to affect perceptions towards the language. Beyond symbolic associations some young people can readily disengage their own sense of Irishness from the Irish language. Language is essentially detached - in both Dublin and Ireland generally - from Irish identity. *Being Irish* here is more than the ability to speak the Irish language - even if at the extreme the Irish language does die as a living language, an Irish identity can continue through 'our history, music and songs and dance' (QQ174). Something of the same ambivalence towards the language is seen in another student who wrote that it is important for his sense of Irishness that '[the Irish] language... should live on' but he also included a note of thanks on the questionnaire for getting him 'out of Irish class' (QQ201). Young people often hold this conflicted view towards the Irish language whereby it is generally celebrated on one particular level but when considered in any more depth the language seems distanced from any personalised sensing of acute meaning towards identity. Young people would appear to approach the Irish language from what might be considered a functional approach towards its meaning. This approach allows young people to negotiate their viewpoints towards many different ongoing and interconnecting perspectives towards the language. Where it may be relatively straightforward and undemanding to identify with the Irish language on a symbolic level - in a privatised questionnaire - moving beyond the symbolic to affecting practical behaviour - like introducing an exclusively Gaelic speaking society or having to speak Gaelic more often - young people begin to vigorously challenge the importance of the Irish language as affecting who they are and importantly who they may want to be. In trying to emphasise how this process can operate the following section will show how young people emphasise differing values - based in different circumstances - that affect both the celebration and contestation of the Irish language.

## 5.4 Utilitarianism of language use

According to Breen *et al.* there has been a cultural readjustment in the position that the Irish language enjoys in Irish schools:

The position of the Irish language in the educational system declined from the 1960s, reflecting a more general change in emphasis from a nationalism based on 'Irish identity' to an economically grounded nationalism. In practice, if not explicitly, the revival of the Irish language ceased to be central to the educational system (1990:135-6).

It will be recalled from the above that some students at A4 School resolutely described the Irish language as a negative association and some emphasised a notion of applied utilitarianism to what languages should be learned in schools. It is not only people in A4 School but young people in general who point at the unmistakable theme of a particular utilitarianism running through young peoples' approaches towards the Irish language. These approaches can be connected to cultural changes in both respective educational institutions but also within Irish society generally.

Clancy (1995) charts changes in the educational system as connected to the economic modernisation of Ireland. Furthermore, for Clancy, these cultural changes affected how young people engaged with formal education:

The growth in the provision and take-up of economically utilisable subjects on the post-primary school curriculum reflects the centrality of economic self-interest as a cultural value (1995:480).

Clancy goes on to claim that, it would appear, 'developments in education in the Republic since the 1960s have oriented the system to make it more responsive to the needs of the economy' (1995:481-482) imbuing the system with 'utilitarian considerations'. Jill, from A3 School, can be seen as explicitly connecting the Irish language with 'utilitarian considerations' connected to her own careerist 'economic self-interest':

The only reason I'm doing Honours Irish is because I want to be a teacher otherwise I'd just drop it to ordinary so that's the only reason I'm doing higher... Irish is irrelevant if you think about it. If you speak French or something you can go to France or whatever but in Ireland what are you going to do? Go to the Gaeltacht and speak to twenty people? You know. Seriously it's not helpful. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Jill, quite obviously, is studying Irish only for what it will offer - a career in teaching. It can also be seen that when Jill reflexively engages with why one should study the Irish language she sees

it as ‘irrelevant’ in the context of its non-utilitarian application on a social level. The predominant non-usage of the Irish language was a theme also highlighted by Esther in A4 School:

We shouldn’t be taught it in school no one else speaks it cause like a tiny bit of Galway a tiny bit of Kerry and like a few of the islands.

Jo- Also a Gaeltacht in Meath [which is nearer to Dublin].

Esther - Well one resident in Meath, and one in Limerick and one Leitrim. If you were born speaking Irish and didn’t know English we have to learn English and English is spoken everywhere. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

When this group was asked if the school concentrated on French as opposed to Irish how would they feel, Esther responded:

Yeah French is better. Like I’m better at French than I am at Irish and I’ve only been doing French for three years.

Once again Esther points at a separation in how language can be seen as a badge of identity and the enforcement of a utilitarian motive and measurability in language use. This view is very like Barry’s attitude towards the Irish language that we encountered above, whereby he felt he had comparatively better French language skills than Irish language skills even though he had been studying French for a much shorter period. Looking at the questionnaire comments from students when asked *In the future do you think you might live outside Ireland for at least 6 months? Please give at least one reason as to why you might live abroad for at least 6 months?* It can be seen that improving or acquiring language skills was a theme for why some young people would like to live abroad. Taking the sample of students from A5 School it is seen that some students definitively linked a connection with living outside Ireland to acquiring language skills:

to learn the language [Russia or German] (QQ144)

learn the language (QQ151)

to experience different culture, get to know new people, speak different languages (QQ157).

The process of learning the Irish language goes against the internationalisation of identity that could be promoted in learning, in the words of Barry, ‘a second European language instead of learning what is basically the new Latin’. Ciaran, also from A4 School, pointed at his dislike of the Irish language around its widespread social non-application:

I hate it, I'm really bad at it as well but like I really hate it. It's useless. We're in Ireland its not like we will get the chance to use it. Once we've finished here we probably won't even use it or consider it again. Why don't we have something useful? (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

This notion of 'something useful' goes to the core of the utilitarian impulse of education.

When schools are socialising sites promotive of particular notions of success - academic results, achievement, social rewards - tied into their socialisation remit of instilling justifiable, naturalised, legitimate notions of self and society - particularly themed around 'producing citizens and workers with the appropriate moral and cultural orientations, skills and capacities' (Clancy, 1995:481) - it is understandable that some students do question the need for studying the Irish language. An unavoidable part of the pattern of schooling socialisation is to inculcate a view in young people towards utilitarianism in a mode of contemplative action towards economic self-interests. It is not only evident in Ciaran above but is the undercurrent of learning a second language itself - giving over educational resources of time to learning a language not applicable in their everyday social spaces when learning another European or global language could be applied outside Ireland if and when people leave Ireland. Young people might not want to necessarily see the demise of the Irish language as a living language outside of Dublin - certainly symbolically anyway - but if it is their results in Technical Drawing, Physics or Biology - and not their result in Irish that can help determine a place in post-secondary education, but more importantly can facilitate a career path, the negative orientation some young people display towards having to learn the Irish language is understandable.

However though young people are particularly driven by a utilitarian pressure there is one particularly noted instance when the Irish language proves itself as more than useful, and is celebrated as such. This is when young people are in a national or international social context and want to limit the understanding of their conversations:

Aoife - On the bus right I saw this girl who started speaking Irish to her friend so other people wouldn't hear and understand what she's saying.

Ashling - Yeah a lot of people do like.

Sofia - People on holidays tend to do that.

Suzanne - People are fascinated, people get fascinated with it [Irish language] when you're on holidays. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

This was also a theme for Emma in the other group at A4 School:

It's funny when you go away to a foreign country and start speaking Irish and they start looking at you and stuff.

Though Emma does not contextualise the self-conscious situation it remains informative that the language was *used* in 'a foreign country'. Ciara from C1 School, though not expressing her own skills level, pointed out that she thought 'when you're away to speak it [Irish] would be great like'. Bella and Kate from A3 School not only used the language when abroad but also welcomed using the language in the everyday setting of the Gaeltacht:

Bella - Well like I'm fluent enough in Irish. I really enjoyed the Gaeltacht for that, I did enjoy speaking Irish. It's like you don't get any opportunity well like other than in class. It's the same with French though. I was at that two years ago and maybe maybe like I can go to France next summer but like I really enjoy that.

Jo - Do you think speaking Irish gives you a feeling of being Irish?

Bella - Maybe. I know we spoke it when we were away [outside Ireland] so people mightn't understand what we were saying like, you know?

Kate - Yeah I liked that. We're both ok at French and I'm ok at Irish I could understand some things and like I definitely thought that was great when we were away to speak a language that you kind of knew other people wouldn't be able to understand.

Given that language skills differ - how good is the 'ok' identified with Bella and Kate - it still remains the case that under particular circumstances the Irish language is, and can be viewed as, useful by some young people. However given the general flow of utilitarianism, it must be accepted that the Irish language runs against the wider understanding of learning a language that can be practically applied in a wider social setting and that this can affect how the Irish language can mark a sense of Irish identity.

## 5.5 Conclusion

As with Catholic identity, the Irish language came to be securely embedded within a traditional conception of Irishness, or what Peillon terms 'authentic Irishness' (1982:100). To be Irish, and realise 'authentic Irishness' was to be Irish speaking or at least support the objective of an Irish



speaking society. The Irish language continues to have some meaning in contemporary Ireland - it is still a compulsory subject in school, there is now an Irish language television channel and, at least according to the 2006 census, more people claim to be Irish speakers than ever before in the history of the state. Michael Mac Gréil, in comparing results from his 1972/73 and 1988/89 samples, points out that the Irish language has become more prized among 'the more highly status in society' and that this might indicate 'that Irish is becoming "fashionable"' (1996:108), at least with the middle class. David McWilliams also shares this point, noting the increased numbers of Irish-speaking schools in Ireland as evidence of the heightened popularity of the Irish language:

When the Pope's Children were born [circa 1980] there were only twenty-five Gaelscoileanna in Ireland. There are over two hundred today. This is an increase of over 900% when the school-going population was increasing by 20% (2005:236).

Though McWilliams' statistics might look impressive and may suggest that the Irish language is increasing in penetration, when set against either the exact number of 'the Pope's Children' or a historical comparison, this 900% increase looks decidedly less impressive.

The exact number of Gaelscoileanna in Ireland is 217, of which a minority are post-primary schools - only 36 in all of Ireland (["http://www.gaeilge.ie/learning/default.asp?catid=73"](http://www.gaeilge.ie/learning/default.asp?catid=73)) Looking specifically at Dublin it can be seen that there are only eight Gaelscoileanna - primary and post-primary - and three of these schools have only been established over the last 14 years (["http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/index.php?page=iarbhunskoileanna&chontae=bac&lang=english"](http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/index.php?page=iarbhunskoileanna&chontae=bac&lang=english)). McWilliams claims that:

Gaelscoileanna are hip and much in demand... From being perceived by many as being too nationalist, too Catholic and too atavistic as they were years ago, Gaelscoileanna are now the pinnacle of educated sophistication (2005:236).

Though none of the schools that participated in this research are Gaelscoileanna - students had attended the Gaeltacht however - the implication that the Irish language might itself be 'hip' in a Dublin context actually seems very much lacking in the young people researched, though their parents may have a different perspective. The Irish language can still be regarded as generating some impact upon the symbolic understanding of Irish identity but the viewpoint that the

language is fundamentally marking what it is to be Irish - as offered by Pearse and de Valera for instance - is far more questionable.

The demographic changes in Dublin, the fact that there is a multitude of different languages spoken and heard may enhance for some young people the symbolisation of the *Irish language* - as it can represent tradition, uniqueness, history and continuity as against the variety of different national identities or languages evident in Dublin - but solid symbolic identification does not address the reality of either language use or meaning for these young people in Dublin. Considering both the educational formalisation and the non-practical use of the Irish language in young peoples' sociality it can hardly be surprising that there is so little sense that the Irish language is shared across identity or that indeed the language indelibly marks identity. The Irish language is essentially not expected to be found in social encounters outside school classes so it fails to connect with actively constructing self-identifications. People in Dublin cannot really be judged on *being Irish* if the benchmark is speaking the Irish language - it neither engages belonging to the Nation in Dublin or collective identification. A symbolic endorsement is typically as far as many young peoples' commitment extends regarding how the Irish language impacts upon identity.

How readily young people symbolically identify with the *Irish language* or *Speaking the Irish language* could be seen as almost an undemanding inclination of identification set against how the Irish language was actually negotiated in focus groups. It was seen that when questioned in focus groups the approval of the language is intermittent - even more uneven than how the Irish language was encountered in questionnaire comments. The idea that the Irish language imbues a measurement of true Irish identity is fundamentally challenged by most young people who all appear to see themselves - and see themselves quite comfortably - as English speakers. It was seen that though young people demonstrate positive symbolic self-identification this is not necessarily translated into how they characterise their own relationships towards the Irish language. It will be recalled how Niamh could both endorse the negative attitudes in understanding that the Gaelic revival 'never took off and it's clutching on to something from the past and is going nowhere' but also how, if now, 'we were speaking our own native tongue that would have been brilliant'. That people are not 'speaking our own native tongue' or not making 'the effort to speak it' is fully realised by young people who in effect hold a utilitarian view towards the Irish language marking identity.

The widespread failure to speak the Irish language would seem to categorically affect young peoples' understandings of its significance for their own sense of Irish identity. Some comments do point to the fore-grounded position of the language within the national consciousness of some young Irish people, but the Irish language is essentially idealised and critically removed from a plain of practicality as it is deemed to never, or in any serious way, threaten or challenge the usage of the English language. Though young people can actually be far more sympathetic towards the Irish language than they ever were towards the Catholic Church or religion in general as expressing something of Irishness, the Irish language itself stands as a far more contested understanding of Irishness than religion does; considering that any coupling of Catholicism and Irish identity was typically rejected outright. The educational formalisation of the language is of course important in this regard, where the rewards of being good at Irish can outweigh the rewards of being good at religion for instance.

Sympathy towards the Irish language is countered by fears that an exclusively Irish speaking society would hardly encourage global dialogue and international cultural exchange. That young people value the English language as allowing Irish identity to be internationally recognised, compared and constructed says a great deal about how the Irish language is not intrinsically valued as a marking of identity. As well as holding to utilitarianism - it is good to have English for instance because it is one of the global languages - young peoples' engagements point strongly towards the belief in options and choice. Rather remarkably, given how the Irish language was presented under Traditional conceptualisations of Irishness as deeply designating Irishness, this optionality points out how a once established marking of 'authentic Irishness' can itself essentially represent only an optional marking upon contemporary Irish identity.

McCoy and Scott's differing 'images' of the Irish language continues to resonate with young peoples' negotiations of the language, pointing towards a dual appreciation of the language as both 'a dreary, irrelevant subject' but also as 'a proud symbol of Irish nationhood'. There is an ambivalence toward the Irish language evident among young people but it can be seen to operate at far more complex levels of negotiations than was seen with how young people considered religion for instance. When we saw with religion in the previous chapter that young people, certainly in focus groups, generally distanced themselves and contested any implication that religion connected with any personalised meaning upon Irish identity, with the Irish language the contested meaning can actually be not only between different people but within the

person. This is captured by a female student at A5 School, when asked what they felt expressed something of Irishness, wrote ‘individual opinion your native language’ (QQ235). Having firstly individualised her conceptualisation of Irishness this person, perhaps as an after-thought provoked through remembering ‘the symbolic inventory’, suggested ‘your native language’. This person’s instance of both individualising Irishness but also particularising Irishness demonstrates a functional operation towards the language and its connection to Irish identity - a process that seems widespread across negotiations of the language for young people in general, where something can be emphasised in one particular context and de-emphasised in another.

This chapter has shown that what may have been regarded as established in the past groundings of Irish identity are far from evenly situated or recognised as fundamental markings of contemporary Irish identity. The last two chapters together suggest that central historical markers of Irishness have been dislodged as central constituents of Irishness. However any suggestion that young peoples’ identity may be approaching a post-national viewpoint would be to ignore the overwhelming sense of self-identification young people express towards Irish identity. In the following chapter we shall begin to consider what may be considered as affirmative associations that young people make and hold towards Irish identity. It will be seen that young people do share a constructed sense of Irish identity but it is crucially an identity beyond the traditional understandings of Irish identity. The following chapter shall start considering collective modes of identification that seem to be more immediate or organic, and certainly more shared, by young people in Dublin towards Irish identity.

# Chapter 6

## Contemporising Irishness - *The General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*

This chapter will shift the emphasis of young peoples' identification away from markings established within the Traditional Paradigm and consider particular understandings of identity that are employed, *most immediately and most naturally*, by many young people when explaining Irishness. Rather obviously the previous two chapters have shown that young people take meaning from the Irish language and religion in constructing Irishness, be it for themselves or for others, but the position of either the Irish language or religion can hardly be argued as deeply significant to a shared understanding of Irishness. This chapter will ask what, from the roots up, is the shared meaning of Irishness directly offered by young people themselves. Though *being Irish* may not necessarily imply *being Catholic* or supporting a Gaelicisation of identity this chapter will show that *being Irish* holds certain shared meanings and understandings for many young people.

The chapter will develop young peoples' fore-grounded conceptualisation of Irishness which falls into what will be termed a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*; *Irishness is something that should be celebrated, endorsed and appreciated because it is themed as a positive, inclusive identity*. This understanding highlights young peoples' most immediate and naturalised sense of meaning towards Irishness that positions Irishness as fundamentally placed within a highly positive sociability. Looking firstly at questionnaire responses and symbolic identification it will be shown just how powerfully Irishness is valued as a sociable identity. This sociability presents Irish people and identity as essentially positioned within

notions of enjoyment, social and individual grounded-ness and an open and welcoming accessibility. The symbolic placement of *The craic*, *Friendliness/helpfulness*, *Socially cooperative and helpful* and *Welcoming to strangers* will be considered to highlight how strongly young people symbolically construct sociability to be within Irishness. Though these symbolic notions have some historical linkage with Irishness they operate, for young people, as more *Tra-modern* markings than markings developed from the explicit historical linkages of the Traditional Paradigm. Using the notion of *Tra-modern* points at how young people are selecting values of Irishness - that may indeed have a pedigree in the discourse of Irishness - which are empowering expressions of identity, that have a historical dimension but their traditionality is modernised and often employed as a method to address modernity. We have some impression of this from how Patrick, in Chapter 4, distinguished his sense of Irishness from his parents around the idea that young people 'see ourselves as great craic' while his parents from 'growing up in the 70s wouldn't have thought Irish people were great craic'. Even though a sense of craic has had some historical linkage within the discourse of Irishness dating back well before the 1970s it can be appreciated that a disjuncture in the continuity of Irish identity is clearly suggested by Patrick's comments. Although the symbolic notions examined in this chapter are certainly historical themes found within the articulation of Irish identity they are often, importantly, received as markedly peripheral and distant to any presentation of Irish identity suggested by the Traditional Paradigm.

After considering particular *Symbols of Irishness* the analysis will then move on and examine understandings of Irishness through three overlapping concepts that inter-connectedly help construct this *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*; *The craic*, *Welcoming* and *Friendly*. Though these positive markings have been sub-divided into separate headings, they often firmly operate at an overlapping and interconnecting level of understanding that serves to establish a powerfully positive view towards shaping what is implied by *being Irish*. They have been dealt with separately only to attempt to simplify the analysis and it will be seen how each concept acts to powerfully reinforce the other and to help establish meaning through a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. The chapter will show that young people are forthright in embracing and reinforcing a selective picture of Irishness. The chapter will begin by highlighting how fore-grounded the general notion of this *General Celebratory Understanding of*

*Irishness* is with many young people and show how this theme of Irishness holds a particular meaning for many young people.

## 6.1 Celebrating Irishness

When asked in the questionnaire to comment on what, if anything, can mark Irishness, unsurprisingly young people offered a wide variety of comments from ‘everything in general’ (QQ161) to the very specific theme of ‘speak[ing] your native language when possible and represent’ (QQ200). Though there are comments that directly include themes like Gaelic sports or the Irish language or the theme of social tolerance what can be emphasised, in general, from the questionnaire comments is how young people often emphasise a general sociability when placing Irishness:

openness, good-spiritness, relaxed attitude to life and friendliness as the Irish are synonymous with these values and with being nice people and we should fulfil the reputation we have been given (QQ8)

friendliness and charm are important symbols for the Irish and it is a lovely thing to be known as (QQ30)

being friendly towards ourselves and immigrants (QQ54)

Just to be kind to people from other countries and I follow our [sporting] teams (QQ57)

the Irish are proud of their culture, their friendliness and good sense of humour (QQ73)

live the Irish life, and don’t worry about tomorrow. Enjoy the pub life and the craic that everyone has in this deadly country (QQ87)

friendliness, acceptance, a sense of community, tradition, togetherness, happiness, confident, sticking up for what is right – fair (QQ145)

be proud and friendly and welcoming (QQ151)

This sociability has often been discursively emphasised as constituting Irish identity. For instance Tony Gray’s romanticised reading of Ireland in *Saint Patrick’s People* places the Irish landscape as Ireland’s number one tourist resource followed then by its people:

the overall and almost overwhelming feeling of welcome which the Irish instantly exude at the approach of a stranger from any shore, even a British one. It's not something Saint Patrick's people can take any great credit for: they can't help it, it's in their very nature (1996:182).

The innateness of the Irish 'welcome' is unavoidable as the Irish 'can't help it, it's in their very nature'; it is an unavoidable part of who they are. This sociable theme explaining Irishness is also found in Bestic. The Irish, for Bestic, have:

a sense of hospitality so deep that at times it frightens colder races, though once they get a taste for it, they cannot leave it alone at all. That desire to make people happy, to help them is, I believe, one of the major differences between the Irish and other nationalities. They genuinely like to help, even without reward of being liked for their efforts, as anyone who has asked the way in the Irish countryside (or cityside, for that matter) will confirm (1969:53).

Generally stated, many young people can quite comfortably situate themselves within Bestic's or Gray's essentialisation of Irishness highlighting notions of Irishness that relate to emphasising and endorsing notions of welcoming, friendliness and a helpfulness.

To emphasise young peoples' willingness to identify Irishness with sociable notions the table below considers four symbolic representations of Irishness - *The craic*, *Socially cooperative and helpful*, *Welcoming to strangers* and *Friendliness/helpfulness*. How valued these symbolisations are point, particularly when compared to the analysis from the last two chapters, towards Irishness being symbolically understood through a very positive construction which is also importantly seen as fundamentally shared with the Generalised Other:



**Table 6.1 Celebratory Symbols of Irishness**

Symbols of Irishness	Very Important or Important to me	Very Important or Important to others	Not Important to me	Not Important to others
The craic	82.7% (N=268)	91.4% (N=297)	16% (N=50)	8% (N=26)
Friendliness/ Helpfulness	92.3% (N=300)	94.5.3% (N=307)	6.2% (N=20)	4.6% (N=15)
Socially cooperative and helpful	91.8% (N=293)	93.8% (N=303)	7.8% (N=25)	5.3% (N=17)
Welcoming to Strangers	82.8% (N=270)	82.9.3% (N=267)	16% (N=52)	16% (N=51)

It can be seen from Table 6.1 that symbolically Irishness implies an association with *The craic*, *Friendliness/helpfulness*, *Socially cooperative and helpful* and *Welcoming to strangers*. All of the four symbols of identity show over three-quarters of the sample claiming self-identification towards these *Symbols of Irishness*. When over a third of the sample identified the *Catholic Church* or *Speaking the Irish language* as personally *Not Important* it is seen that a far reduced 7.8% (N=25) position being *Socially cooperative and helpful* as *Not Important* and a mere 6.2% (N=20) claiming *Friendliness/helpfulness* is *Not Important* in any personal symbolisation of Irishness.

The above table clearly points out how shared young people feel these symbolisations of Irishness are. The previous two chapters showed a marked disjuncture between the Generalised Other and young peoples' symbolic identification but with regard to the above symbols, a much greater shared feeling towards Irish identity is seen to exist. Though young people generally continue to privilege symbolic associations onto the Generalised Other above their own, there is a much closer comparison between young peoples' own valuation and that of the Generalised

Other. For instance the range difference between the Generalised Other and young peoples' own valuation of two symbols - *Friendliness/helpfulness* and *Socially cooperative and helpful* - is no more than three percent and indeed young people over-identify with *Welcoming to strangers* compared to the Generalised Other. When young people demonstrated a readiness to significantly over-privilege the Generalised Others' understandings of Irishness with regard to the *Catholic Church*, the *Irish language* or *speaking the Irish language* quite obviously their readiness to identify with sociable markings suggests that these hold a particular value for young people at a personal level and also at some level felt as shared with the Generalised Other.

However it is not only in the context of how highly valued and shared these *Symbols of Irishness* are that marks them out as meaningful and distinct. From the entire 27 *Symbols of Irishness* listed on the questionnaire these symbols account for four of the six highest ranking symbols in personal identifications towards Irishness:

**Table 6.2 Top seven ranked Symbols of Irishness**

Symbols of Irishness	Very Important or Important to me	Not Important to me
Friendliness/Helpfulness	92.3% (N=300)	6.2% (N=20)
Socially cooperative and helpful	91.8% (N=293)	7.8% (N=25)
Well educated	91.1% (N=296)	8.3% (N=27)
Saint Patrick's Day	89% (N=290)	10.4% (N=34)
Creative, artistic or talented	85.8% (N=278)	13.3% (N=43)
Welcoming to Strangers	82.8% (N=270)	16% (N=52)
The craic	82.7% (N=268)	15.4% (N=50)

Though *Creative, artistic or talented* (85.8% (N=278)) was more highly valued than *The craic* (82.7% (N=268)) and *Welcoming to strangers* (82.8% (N=270)), and although *Well educated* (91.1% (N=296)) was seen as more symbolically valued than the idea of being *Socially cooperative and helpful* (91.8% (N=293)), the highest personal value in symbolising Irishness for young people was *Friendliness/Helpfulness* (92.3% (N=300)). The sample can be seen as personally identifying more with these four symbolic markings of Irishness than with other markings of Irishness such as *St Patrick's Day*, *Learning/Understanding Irish history*, *U2*, *Irish soccer team* or the *GAA*. Taken as a generalisation it can be claimed that these four values

together represent factors of Irish identity that are most symbolically fore-grounded in how young people personally identify with Irishness.

However though young people clearly value these symbolic associations there is, as was seen in symbolic negotiations towards the *Catholic Church* and the *Irish language*, a division in how these *Symbols of Irishness* can be emphasised by different cohorts based upon gender and class. Once again a breakdown in the questionnaire data shows that class and gender continue to mark how these symbolic markings may be embedded within a young person's sense of Irishness. Table 6.3 below breaks down identification through class and gender and shows how uneven valuations can be:

**Table 6.3 Personal Symbolism of Irishness viewed through Class and Gender<sup>4</sup>**

Symbols of Irishness	Male working class	Female working Class	Male middle class	Female middle Class
<i>Very Important or Important</i>				
Welcoming to strangers	73.7% (N=84)	84.5% (N=104)	80.6% (N=25)	98.3% (N=57)
The craic	80.2% (N=89)	87.8% (N=108)	77.4% (N=24)	79.6% (N=47)
Friendliness/helpfulness	91.1% (N=102)	94.3% (N=115)	93.5% (N=29)	93.1% (N=54)
Socially co-operative and helpful	88.4% (N=99)	95.8% (N=114)	83.9% (N=26)	94.7% (N=54)

<sup>4</sup> R value of .000 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Welcoming to strangers based upon Class, and R value of .000 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Welcoming to strangers based upon Gender. R value of .249 for Personal symbolic attachment to the The craic based upon Class, and R value of .039 for Personal symbolic attachment to The craic based upon Gender. R value of .147 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Friendliness/helpfulness based upon Class, and R value of .002 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Friendliness/helpfulness based upon Gender. R value of .166 for Personal symbolic attachment to the Socially co-operative and helpful based upon Class, and R value of .000 for Personal symbolic attachment to Socially co-operative and helpful based upon Gender.

Though all cohorts value these sociable markings in consistently greater numbers than those of the *Catholic Church* or *the Irish language* it is evident that both class, but particularly gender, play leading roles in how these factors may be emphasised; generally young males make a lesser association with these symbolic values than females. The only values which show lesser female identification is *The craic* which is valued by 80.2% (N=89) of working class males against a fractionally lower 79.6% (N=47) of middle class females, other than this females over-identify with these *Symbols of Irishness* in comparison to young males. This feature of females overly identifying with *Symbols of Irishness* is not restricted simply to the above symbols.

Across the *Symbols of Irishness* section a pattern is unmistakably evident where generally it is females, irrespective of class, who demonstrate more of a symbolic association with *Symbols of Irishness* than their young male counterparts. Below is a table outlining levels of identification based upon gender:

**Table 6.4 Identification towards Symbols of Irishness based upon Gender**

Symbols of Irishness	Very Important or Important for Young Females	Very Important or Important for Young Males	Not important for Young Females	Not Important for Young Males	R Value
GAA	58% (N=106)	61.4% (N=89)	41% (N=75)	37.2% (N=54)	.002
Irish soccer team	72.5% (N=132)	79% (N=114)	27% (N=49)	20% (N=29)	.004
U2	60.3% (N=108)	58% (N=80)	39.3% (N=70)	42% (N=58)	.002
Classic Irish literature (e.g. Joyce)	62.2% (N=112)	54.6% (N=77)	36.7% (N=66)	44.7% (N=63)	.001
Celtic Tiger	61% (N=110)	64.3% (N=92)	37.2% (N=67)	35% (N=50)	.011
Multiculturalism	74.8% (N=134)	57.5% (N=80)	24% (N=43)	42.4% (N=59)	.000
Alcoholic abuse	50.2% (N=91)	52.7% (N=77)	48.6% (N=88)	46.6% (N=68)	.001
Welcoming to strangers	89% (N=161)	75.2% (N=109)	8.8% (N=16)	24.8% (N=36)	.000
Irish language	74.4% (N=137)	66% (N=95)	25% (N=46)	33.3% (N=48)	.001
The craic	85.1% (N=155)	79.5% (N=113)	12.6% (N=23)	19% (N=27)	.039
Intolerance	46.6% (N=82)	48.5% (N=67)	52.3% (N=92)	50% (N=69)	.005
Repression	49.7% (N=82)	47.8% (N=64)	49.7% (N=82)	51.8% (N=71)	.000
Speaking the Irish language	62% (N=113)	54.5% (N=78)	36.8% (N=67)	44% (N=63)	.042
Violent	36.1% (N=64)	37.7% (N=54)	63.3% (N=112)	60.8% (N=87)	.003
The government	64.3% (N=117)	56% (N=80)	34.6% (N=63)	44% (N=63)	.003
Political corruption	51.1% (N=90)	50% (N=70)	47.7% (N=84)	49.3% (N=69)	.040
Learning/understanding Irish history	79.5% (N=144)	79.9% (N=115)	19.8% (N=36)	20.1% (N=29)	.011
Irish folk music	57.4% (N=104)	56.3% (N=81)	41.4% (N=75)	43% (N=62)	.006
Friendly/helpfulness	93.9% (N=169)	91.6% (N=113)	4.4% (N=8)	8.4% (N=12)	.002

Riverdance	43.9% (N=79)	24.6% (N=35)	55.5% (N=100)	74% (N=105)	.000
Catholic Church	51% (N=93)	58% (N=84)	48.3% (N=88)	41.4% (N=60)	.008
Spirituality – or beliefs in God	60.5% (N=109)	58.3% (N=84)	38.9% (N=70)	40.3% (N=58)	.003
Physically/geographically mobile	62.9% (N=107)	72% (N=100)	36.5% (N=62)	28% (N=39)	.000
Well educated	91.7% (N=166)	90.3% (N=130)	7.7% (N=14)	9% (N=13)	.007
Creative, artistic and talented	87.2% (N=157)	84% (N=121)	12.2% (N=22)	14.6% (N=21)	.010
Socially co-operative and helpful	97.1% (N=168)	87.4% (N=125)	4% (N=7)	12.6% (N=18)	.000
Saint Patrick's Day	91.2% (N=166)	86.1% (N=124)	8.2% (N=15)	13.2% (N=19)	.022

It is evident from the above Table that a process of female over-identification is readily apparent compared to young male's identification. Of the 27 *Symbols of Irishness* listed in the questionnaire young males personal valuation of *Very Important* and *Important* only out-weights females' identification in nine instances – *GAA*, *Irish soccer team*, *Celtic Tiger*, *Alcoholic abuse*, *Intolerance*, *Violent*, *Learning/understanding Irish history*, *Catholic Church* and *Physically/geographically mobile*. Two of these values are sports related and given the male bias of soccer and Gaelic games one would expect males to identify more with these values than females but also three of these values are negative associations - *Alcoholic abuse*, *Intolerance* and *Violent* – meaning that females are less inclined to view symbols towards Irishness through a negative frame. The female cohort shows a readiness to identify with *Symbols of Irishness* in far greater proportions than the male cohort. It is not simply that females identified with 18 of the 27 *Symbols of Irishness* listed but there is consistently a 5-10% differential with 10 values; *Classic Irish literature* (e.g. *Joyce*), *Multiculturalism*, *Welcoming to strangers*, *Irish language*, *The craic*, *Speaking the Irish language*, *The government*, *Riverdance*, *Socially co-operative and helpful* and *Saint Patrick's Day*.

However though males, and generally middle class males, may not identify as enthusiastically with *Symbols of Irishness* as the female cohort it is quite evident that young males certainly recognize the personal value of *Tra-modern* symbolization, with positive identification always over 70%. Though cohorts do differ in how they may negotiate symbolic markings it should be emphasized that the symbolic endorsements, and suggested celebrations of Irishness through *Welcoming to strangers*, *Socially co-operative and helpful*, *Friendly/helpfulness* and *The craic*, hold a clear majority view form all cohorts.

Young peoples' most fore-grounded symbolic understandings of Irishness value sociable markings but how do young people, both on the questionnaire and importantly within focus groups, comprehend Irish identity through this positive sociability? We will consider Irish identity through three overlapping concepts often emphasised by young people in explaining what Irishness is; *The craic*, *Welcoming* and *Friendly*.

### 6.1.1 *The craic*

Terry Eagleton describes *craic* in *The Truth About The Irish* as:

Irish for 'fun', 'having a good time' usually a mixture of music, drink and talk. An over-used term, now rapidly approaching the status of 'begorrah'. Is Irish *craic* a myth? You must be joking. Few nations on earth know how to enjoy themselves like the Irish (1999:46).

We have already seen above that there exists both a personal and a Generalised Other symbolic association between the notion of *The craic* and Irishness. There is no doubt that this positive association is understood and celebrated by many young people when expressing their Irishness; one student wrote Irishness was all about 'keeping up the craic' (QQ62) while for another student it was 'celebrating days like St Patrick's day and having a laugh' (QQ270). The Irish have been renowned for a particular sense of humour, often self-deprecating and quick witted. The setting and popularity of *Father Ted*, quite obviously, suggests that the Irish have an ability to laugh at an Irish characterisation. This notion of *craic* and 'having a laugh' has, of course, long been a theme within Irish identity.

The notion of *craic* proved to be a prominent theme in the general analysis of the questionnaire comments. Appreciating that this was such a strong mode of understanding Irishness for young people the focus groups began with the following statement aimed at highlighting the general positive attitudes often attached to *being Irish*:

*Younger people seem to have positive images of being Irish – it's about being friendly, creative, welcoming, being well educated, about enjoying the craic – would you people share these positive views about being Irish?*

In most instances all focus group participants willingly accepted this positive statement and often immediately emphasised the notion of *craic* as paramount in this positive image:

Cathy – Yeah definitely it's about having a good time.

Jo – Nothing bad?

Cathy – No it's what you are.

Deborah – Yeah we're all about the craic. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

We can see that Cathy in C1 School subsumes her own individual identity with that of *being Irish* which is equated to 'having a good time', with Deborah emphasising 'we're all about the craic'. A similar emphasis upon craic was evident from Jane, from A4 School, who established Irishness around 'having fun'. From A3 School a similar view towards Irishness also prevailed:

Anne - Yeah defo "cead mile fáilte".

Polly - Its cool to be Irish everybody loves the Irish we're so popular.

Brian - Yeah I think so. I think you kind of associate it with good things, with Irish people, like being friendly you know stuff like that. We're the land of saints and scholars and we are well educated, always have been. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

To 'associate' the Irish 'with good things' is vital to young peoples' understanding that Irishness is reflected within the grounded meaning of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*, and that Irish people are 'cool', liked and indeed 'popular'.

Though self-identification can typically comfortably accommodate Irishness on this level of positivity it can certainly be seen that the notion of the craic, or the general notion of immediate positive self-identification in understanding Irishness can, however, be challenged. An exception to the opening statement of celebrated positivity towards Irishness came from Hazel, in C1 School. After reading out the introductory note Hazel directed her comments towards any exclusive attachment of Irish identity being the *only* national identity prioritising 'fun':

Hazel – No like the Irish ain't the only ones to have fun.

Fiona – Yeah but it's good [being Irish, directed at Hazel].

Hazel – Maybe.

Jo – What do you think it's like?

Hazel – Don't know, just that the Irish are not the only ones that have any craic. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

However though Hazel rightly highlights the problematic attachment of an exclusive social characteristic to any nationalised group - challenging the notion that the Irish somehow

monopolise the craic/fun - she did not necessarily challenge the idea that *being Irish* automatically implied some form of negativity and indeed she went on to rebut Fiona's challenge that being Irish was 'good' with a 'Maybe' and not with an outright statement of disapproval or distance from this characterisation.

Essentially when young people are confronted with a positive conceptualisation of Irishness there is a willingness to accept a description of Irishness as found within positive markings and the fore-grounded notion of craic in understanding this Irishness. This foregrounding of craic can sometimes be seen as a defence against negative constructions of Irishness. This defence can be seen in how students negotiated a questionnaire comment from a student at A3 School, who identified herself as 'not Irish' and indeed who did not like 'Ireland all that much', when she explicitly challenged the craic supposition. Her questionnaire comment, responding to *Having just completed the questionnaire is there anything now that you think is important in showing Irishness and why?*, reads:

I understand how it feels to be proud of your country, but I think you shouldn't take it too far. People need to relax and get on with their lives, instead of obsessing over national identity. You're not special, you're a country like everyone else, except there is only 4 million of you. PS I think the Irish think everyone think they're great 'craic' (not true), very friendly (nonsense), and are heavy drinkers (nothing to be proud of.) You asked for honesty (QQ78).

This comment was taken into the focus groups and when read out to a group at A1 School roused general resistance to its suggestion:

Alan - But we do [think we are good fun and friendly], but there'd still be Irish people that aren't. The majority of Irish people are great fun, nice and basically have a laugh and there'd be the other lads who take advantage of that.

Lee - Depends on where you go like Irish would be more accepted in England than we would be in some place like Belgium.

Damien - Having a go at Belgium.

Lee - I think the reason why we think we're good craic is that a lot of people say we are. We don't just think it cause we say it. People do tell us.

Damien - They're much more friendly down the West though. Like in Dublin you wouldn't be as friendly as they are down the bog in Clare or something.



Jo - Do you think it matters what other nationalities think of the Irish?

Damien - Makes you feel good you know.

Christopher - Proud to be Irish.

Patrick - Suppose it is though. If you go going over to another country, you don't want them stereotyping like as some certain person.

Alan - It's better than them saying they hate you.

Jo - Craic stereotype.

Patrick - You don't want them to stereotype you as something bad cause when you go over there they'll automatically think you're something negative.

Alan - Like we do to them. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though we saw above that females generally identify with the *Tra-modern Symbols of Irishness* in greater proportions than young males, the general idea of the craic can certainly be seen as strongly emphasised within this focus group. Clearly this group associates the craic with a sense of Irishness, which Lee sees legitimated by the positive reaction 'a lot of people' may get to being Irish. It is not simply how others may construct Irishness that affects how the craic may be seen but importantly its use and practice; the reaction to a negative comment about Irishness was played out in very much a fun dialogical where the students were *having a bit of craic*. Levy rightly considers craic as:

a very important concept in Irish life. It colours much of what people say. Seeing the funny side of things and bringing a humorous perspective into chat is the basis of all good conversation in Ireland and the Irish ability to find humour in most things is legendary (2000:49).

Damien's suggestion that Lee is 'Having a go at Belgium' and Alan's perceptive comments that stereotyping works *all ways* not just in how *others think of us* but in how *we think of others* is suggestive of *having some craic* while also being engaged with the discussion. Though the conversation may have moments of light-heartedness it also has moments that offer an insight into Irish identity for young people. It is a rather understandable position, raised by Patrick, that if you must be nationally stereotyped then why not celebrate a positive stereotype as against a negative stereotype? It is obviously better, regarding labelled national characterisations, to be associated with a positive social image and orientation than holding an association around negativity, for instance as being drunkenly abusive which some students stereotypically

associated with English people. Even though Alan recognises that stereotyping is an intrinsic feature of peoples' approach to national identity he also himself accepts, perhaps the stereotype, that a 'majority of Irish are great fun, nice and basically have a laugh'.

If Alan's generalisation was applied to the focus groups themselves it would be difficult to disagree with him as the majority of people who engaged in the focus groups were indeed 'nice', co-operative and many indeed did 'have a laugh'. Young people not only understand the positive notion of craic but indeed actively practice it. It can be seen, not only in Alan's grouping but in most groupings, that the students engaged by 'bringing a humorous perspective' into their conversations. For instance Paul from this group in A1 School, when asked how he reacts to criticism about Ireland stated:

People criticise Ireland for things that are wrong with our country but things are much worse, wrong with other countries. They're doing things that are like hundred times worse than Irish people have, they can't like, it's not their job to turn around and criticise us. If America criticised Ireland for not having enough like ethnic minorities living in the country they have like stupid gun laws. A person can walk out of their house with an Uzi and say that's for protection and put twenty bullets into someone to protect themselves, one will do the job like. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Not only did Paul engage reflexively with the idea of criticism of Ireland - if America was the source - he humorously reversed the criticism pointing at American gun laws and how someone can shoot someone twenty times in the name of personal protection when one bullet would 'do the job like'. A similar sense of fun can be seen when the other group at A1 School were asked how it was that they were all under eighteen and yet some seemed to be involved with regularly drinking alcohol:

Eamon - People are looking older and older so it's easier to get served.

Tom - And ID's they're easy to get.

Rory - Cause Tom makes them.

Tom - Shut up! (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Having some craic can also be seen when Jenny who, when told that all identities would be confidential, played on this confidentiality in constructing her self-identity when she was asked to introduce herself:

I'm from Nigeria yeah that's where I'm from. And now I'm living in Ireland – I'm 16 - and I have no parents they live back in Nigeria. I moved to London... Yeah I'm really rich and have a gold house in monopoly land and Foxrock and Ailsbury and I drive a Porsche turbo 9/11. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

For McNally the concept of craic has become quite 'central to the Irish character' (2005:19). Writing of 'Freud's inability to make progress with his Irish patients' McNally feels it is a limitation on Freud's part to realise that the Irish psyche is comprised of three separate parts, 'the conscious, the sub-conscious, and the bit that does things for the craic' (2005:20). Craic would certainly seem prevalent in how some young people conduct themselves and certainly Patrick's comment that young people 'see ourselves as great craic' could be seen not only in how the focus group conversations could themselves be engaged with but in comments on the questionnaires. For instance a student at B1 School, given the power to change something about Irish society would change 'stupid questionnaires like this' (QQ240). While this student may have wanted to remove 'stupid questionnaires' another would address, 'the government! A load of crap!' and then wrote that 'Bertie Ahern is gay and shouldn't have the job' (QQ139). A sensing of craic can also be picked up in how some students placed their role model. With one student, for instance, writing that Homer Simpson was their role model because he 'is the [greatest] character ever made. He is a man full of contradictions like great men and inspires me' (QQ204) while another male student wrote Britney Spears was his role model 'because she got big tits' (QQ115). Indeed the sense of craic extends to how one student wrote that their occupation was 'Rent boy' undertaken for both 'The money. The trill' and then going on to identify one of his role models as 'Ron Jeremies' (QQ267), a popular porn star.

Though craic certainly colours how some young people theme their engagement with Irishness it is also understood that craic can be applied both universally across Irishness and limited by what Alan suggested would be 'the other lads who take advantage of' the positive association of Irishness. This protective enclosure of Irishness - that 'The majority of Irish people are people are great fun, nice and basically have a laugh' while perhaps a minority may 'take advantage' - seems designed to force Irish identity to fit the universalising understanding that *decent Irish people* are good craic who understand their identity around the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. This is not only implied above in Alan's group at A1 School but can essentially be seen in how Jenny's grouping at A4 School negotiated the

challenge to Irishness presented by the questionnaire comment from the student at A3 School. When the grouping heard the negative statement they negotiated it's substance by both de-emphasising negativity from Irishness and by universalising 'snobby people' - those that can give Irishness a damaging reputation - as present in every country:

Sandra - That's a bit harsh, not fair. Like who hates Ireland?

Jo - People think it's harsh, anyone think there's any truth in it?

Emma - There is some snobby people, not very nice.

Kelly - In all cultures you're going to get like snobs.

Jenny - It's hard to classify as a whole. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though it can be seen that some students wholeheartedly embrace the notion of the Irish as craic it can again be limited in application with the acceptance that not all Irish people are indeed good craic, some may be 'snobby people' but these snobby people affect 'all cultures' in Kelly's opinion.. Again a rejection of blanket stereotyping is offered by Jenny, as it was by Patrick above, but it can be seen that if there must be stereotyping then it works in favour of the Irish by emphasising positive sociability. The question of 'who hates Ireland?' or who could hate a sociability themed towards a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* in some ways goes to the core understanding of Irishness for young people.

Understanding oneself within the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* allows a picture of meaning for Irishness that connects to the assumed goodwill others have for Irish people - both other Irish people but also importantly a General Internationalised Other. When Irishness is themed at the level of a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* it is an articulation of identity that many young people willingly accept, conferring status and prestige as a marked currency of Irish identity. Even when young people understand possible limitations in how Irishness may be practiced - that there may be 'snobby people' - it remains difficult to escape identifying oneself with Irishness through the positive implication of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. This can be seen in how a group at A1 School negotiated the criticism from the student at A3 School by accepting the centrality of alcohol to practiced and projected Irish sociability but emphasising the positive in this sociability:

Ray - Well we are fun and we are heavy drinkers.

Jo - But she's saying it is nothing to be proud of, very friendly and she's going its nonsense.

Ray - Yeah.

Tom - I think we are one of the heaviest drinkers. I think we just drink for the craic. Other countries people have a point or something, to socialise, we go out to binge drink just to get drunk... The point is [internationally] there's Irish pubs everywhere I think that's great really shows you yeah [Ireland is popular]. It's like the Irish pubs [outside Ireland] they don't look like the Irish pubs cause they're all green and leprechauns, when you go to an Irish pub in Ireland it's just like a pub. You go to a pub in Spain it's like diddlydidi its great I love [it]...

Martin - The Irish culture like when people come over they expect not crazy but real fun people going around the street dressed in flags like green pubs and all. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

It is seen that Tom and Martin negotiate the negativity attached to the description of Irishness by emphasising both the international expectation of Ireland - that the Irish have a duty of performance - and that in Ireland sociability involves something of a drinking culture but, importantly, a continuing understanding for Martin of Irish people as 'real fun people' or for Ray 'we are fun', that imbues a particularly welcoming craic culture. Smyth *et al.*'s suggestion that 'the *auld* Ireland of the mighty *craic* down the pub is an image we are reluctant to shake off, as it is part of who we are - our cultural identity' (2003:113, italics in original), seems very much established within Ray, Tom and Martin's 'cultural identity'.

Though understanding one's self and collective identity as framed by craic may seem superficial when compared to understanding Irishness as framed by Catholicism or diffuse Gaelicism, quite obviously notions of craic influence identity. It influences how young people perceive Irishness and indeed it can influence how young people engage with Irishness. When young people articulate their sense of Irishness the notion of craic is quite often fore-grounded in their understandings. However what should be rather obvious in relation to a characterisation of identity that emphasises *good craic*, particularly given the researched grouping were in a period of their lives when *being good craic* can be understood to be socially advantageous, is that it is difficult to not want to identify with such a characterisation of collective identity. The positive association of craic makes it a positive and compelling characterisation of identity but it does say something for young people about *being Irish; we are known as good craic* so let us maintain that. Young people do like to see themselves 'as great craic', as suggested by Patrick, and

certainly the focus group engagements would support Patrick's point - the conversations were at times loaded with humour and *slagging*. But understanding one's identity around being 'great craic' is only one facet within the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* and certainly compared to the ideas of *Welcoming* or *Friendly* it could be suggested that the *craic* is an easy label to embrace and practice set against what may seem the greater challenges of *being Welcoming* and *being Friendly*. The following section will consider another positively compelling characterisation of identity - *Welcoming* - but unlike *craic* this characterisation of identity can more fully test the practice of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*.

### **6.1.2 Welcoming**

As with the notion of *craic*, being welcoming has an established pedigree within Irish identity. *Cead mile fáilte* has long been a clichéd interpretation of Irishness both within and outside of Ireland and the idea of a particularly committed heart-felt Irish welcome, has, of course, been a cornerstone of the popular discourse around Irish identity. We saw this above in both Gray's and Bestic's readings of Irishness and how completely intrinsic each author placed the general suggestion of welcoming within their understandings of Irishness. The notion of welcoming can of course still be implied to affect how young people understand what it is to be Irish and as was shown above, symbolically over three-quarters of the sample locate some personal identification in being *Socially cooperative and helpful* and *Welcoming to strangers*. The association of Irishness with welcoming, as with *craic*, can compel identification; given the social value of the notion of being welcoming not many people would disassociate themselves from this understanding. However, unlike *craic*, being welcoming is a more testing understanding of identity than simply being good *craic*. The notion of welcoming implies a certain hospitable inclusiveness - and connects to the notion of friendliness - to people not immediately associated with the local, or indeed national, social milieu. Quite obviously being welcoming - and by implication tolerant - can be a more challenging conceptualisation than simply understanding one's collective identity as *being good craic*. A fellow student may be *great craic* but this may not necessarily mean they are welcoming towards fellow students' of a different sexuality, colour or religious identity.

However in saying that being welcoming is more testing than being good *craic* it can still be understood that symbolically young people identified with both a personalised and a projected

(for the Generalised Other) understanding of Irishness being *Welcoming to strangers*. This suggestion of a symbolic understanding around Irishness based upon the notion of welcoming is repeated within a wide variety of questionnaire comments that sees Irishness as operating around being welcoming, tolerant and inclusive:

to welcome all nationalities into our country and to treat them the way we would like to be treated (QQ5)

well I think it is important we welcome refugees because for many years we were immigrants to other countries (QQ21)

I think that people have always loved the friendly, welcoming nature of the Irish and I think that it is important to keep up that image (QQ209)

Make people more welcome (QQ335)

more welcoming to people (QQ337)

Obviously the comments above can be understood as directed at challenges to welcoming notions seen, for instance, in the increase in racial abuse in recent years in Dublin and Ireland.

Though there is obviously some association with welcoming it can also be seen that some students can see a very definite limited form of welcoming as operating in Ireland; welcoming can be limited by *who you are* or *who you are perceived to be*. Each comment above points at wanting to utilise the idea of welcoming to perhaps encourage a greater practice of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*; to welcome people is valued as good in itself. This is clear, for instance, from two students at A2 School who both highlighted a limited discriminatory welcoming but who can see welcoming as employable against this limited discrimination:

I would change the way we as a society are so racist, we are becoming know as a racist country which is so bad in my opinion we are apparently “welcoming to strangers” (QQ3).

[I would change] racist people and the discrimination against different cultures. I would like to have more cultures and people from different countries in Ireland (QQ18).

Though the Irish may have an association with welcoming it can be seen that, certainly for these two students, it is a limited welcoming that threatens to fundamentally undermine the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* as Ireland becomes associated with the negative identity of ‘a racist country’.

The way in which welcoming can be more testing upon the practice of being Irish can be seen in how Jenny, who is herself an immigrant, contests the notion of welcoming and rejects the charge of complete positivity implied around this conceptualisation of Irishness:

Some of it [Irishness as positive image] is [true], sure, I just disagree on the welcoming bit not from my [Jenny is Australian] point of view but from other peoples [point of view] who've moved to Ireland... like racial comments and shit. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Jenny feels she was certainly welcomed she also recalled her social experiences and how she encountered certain verbal abuse - 'I was called Aussie prossie for years when I came here [Dublin], Australia prostitute... "Aussie prossie" and ok I'm 11!' - but she understands the verbal abuse she encountered as less abusive than that faced by other immigrants, particularly refugees and asylum-seekers. It is understandable why Jenny can operationalise an understanding that sees different levels of welcoming, and so different levels of abuse or exclusion. Certainly for Jenny some of the verbal abuse she encountered could be seen as themed around a bantering - essentially a return to the theme of craic, the *slagging-off* of other people which is a common form of social engagement in Dublin. For instance Christopher from A1 School made his support of the English cricket team during the Ashes Tournament contingent upon 'hate[ing] the Australians'. This should not be seen as Christopher hating Jenny and her co-nationals through an abusive formatting of negatively racialising Australians, but rather in the sporting environment - particularly at A1 School which Tony described as imbued with a 'rugby culture' - of bantering with opponents and *slagging* the opposition. Christopher undoubtedly meant his comment to be understood around this sporting bantering and not as any racial slur.

This bantering towards other nationalities can be suggested as implicitly understood within the A4 School group with Jenny, when Kelly commented upon racist abuse that 'it depends on what nationality you are'. When "Aussie prossie" can be understood as abusive *slagging*, Jenny tells a story of how she witnessed a violent racist attack, where "FU for stealing our jobs you nigger" was directed at the victim. Not only was Jenny never violently attacked or reproached with "FU for stealing our jobs you "Aussie prossie" but she understands an operational difference in perceived Irish welcoming. An understanding that racial comments are directed specifically at 'what nationality you are', or particularly around what colour you are, connected with an association with asylum-seekers and refugees, suggests that Irish welcomes



can indeed be quite limited. There is, as such, an operational hierarchy of welcoming, and indeed a perceived operational hierarchy of abuse. Within this group at A4 School there was a general understanding of limited welcoming and discrimination in operation against refugees:

Pauline – I think it's more like refugees that people are racist against.

Emma - Chinese.

Pauline - Especially the older people.

Emma - They say they're taking over the jobs.

Wendy - Then I'm racist against refugees they're here like illegally.

Jenny – Are you racist against black people?

Wendy – No.

Jenny – Are you racists against Chinese?

Wendy - No.

Jenny – Are you racist against Pakistanis?

Wendy- No just like against refugees and stuff. Give me money for my baby now.

Emma - People who come in and take over.

Jenny – The Romanians and they're like Asian [Jenny is unsure of word] fuck-off whatever that word is. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Wendy demonstrates a slippage between asylum-seeker and refugee and legality and illegality, is it seen that a very limited mode of welcoming is understood as offered to 'refugees and stuff'. Piaras Mac Éinrí points out how Ireland's migration policy, historically and contemporarily, is essentially determined by a 'largely market-led' approach (2001:66) and it can be seen that Wendy seems to direct her comments against the notion of non-market integration, 'Give me money for my baby now'. Wendy's claim of not being racist against 'black people', 'Chinese' or 'Pakistanis' but rather 'against refugees' as 'they're here like illegally' strongly points towards a limited Irish welcome.

Boucher has written of the *image* of the Irish welcome and what the *reality* can be for some migrants:

*Cead mile fáilte*, one hundred thousand welcomes, is an Irish language expression that is often used on official occasions to greet representatives of foreign governments and organisations arriving in Ireland. *Fáilte* is also part of the tourist

board's Irish language name, representing the official welcoming image of Ireland marketed to potential tourists abroad. However, it is not an expression that one hears or sees used officially to welcome immigrants entering Ireland (2004:188).

Boucher highlights how the formal categorisation of migrants influences the 'conditional welcomes, depending on their official immigration status' (ibid) migrants receive. Though young people do - as Wendy does - demonstrate limited welcomes, or 'conditional welcomes', to certain people formally defined, this does not necessarily lead to actively unwelcoming people - intentionally excluding people from social relations - but rather seems to limit the degree of welcoming people may receive.

As with *Craic*, it can be understood that the notion of *Welcoming* is quite fore-grounded within the national consciousness of many young peoples' understandings of Irishness. Though the practice of welcoming can be tested it should be understood that contestation around the notion of welcoming is set within a context that places the Irish as not so much unwelcoming but rather that there are degrees of welcoming that can be applied - from the somewhat unconditional welcome on offer from some students in A4 School to the requirements for pro-activity on the part of international students in A1 and A3 Schools if they want to feel welcomed and engaged with the school group. Young people did not necessarily show unwelcoming attitudes - they did not even necessarily acknowledge any pro-active exclusion of co-students because of judged social backgrounds - but it can be understood that welcoming can be limited to other students, as with international students at A1 and A3 School who are often required to make the initial effort to gain any sense of welcoming from their co-students. Though the theme of welcoming will be more fully tested when examining how young people negotiate the Immigrant Other, what is important to understand is that young people like to view their Irishness as generally welcoming and tolerant of others. This idea of welcoming is unquestionably tied to the notion of the Irish being friendly. The following section will consider the influence the notion of being *Friendly* has upon young peoples' understandings of Irishness and reflect on how this itself connects directly to how well the application of welcoming is practiced.

### **6.1.3 Friendly**

Like the other values considered above the notion that Irishness is associated with friendliness has long been a theme within the discourse of Irish culture, and indeed considering the fact that

the highest personal value in symbolising Irishness for young people was *Friendliness/Helpfulness* (85.3% (N=300)), it can still be understood as underpinning a key symbolic understanding of Irishness. Though obviously some understanding of *Friendliness/Helpfulness* remains paramount in symbolically negotiating Irishness, this notion of being friendly can be seen as going beyond the roles that either the craic or welcoming play in grounding Irishness as meaningful; without this understanding of being friendly, it is difficult to understand how the practice of either the craic or welcoming could be so fully accepted within young peoples' understanding of Irishness. It was highlighted in the introduction that these specific factors of identity operate inter-connectedly, however the emphasis upon friendliness seems to act as the dominant connecting bond that concretely ties the ideas of craic and welcoming together in a united and overlapping understanding of Irishness that helps to format a widespread comprehension of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. For instance when examining welcoming above it could certainly be argued that some young people demonstrated friendliness.

Being friendly is an important way in which young people explain the mechanics of Irishness which helps to position Irishness as different to other national identities. As with welcoming the notion of being friendly can be employed to emphasise how Irishness is something one can identify with. This is seen by one student's comment on changing something about Ireland, 'Having more people coming to Ireland to show that we're a friendly nation' (QQ280). This student understands the volume of non-Irish people in Ireland as a measurement demonstrating Irish friendliness and certainly for this student there is something of a presumption that when people come to Ireland they will encounter a friendly attitude and that this can show how Ireland is then a 'friendly nation'.

The notion of friendliness, like that of the craic or welcoming, is quite immediate in how some young people position what they '*think is important in showing Irishness and why*':

I think we should, in this day and age, forget being so "Irish" and be a bit more internationally friendly. And that is what Ireland is known for anyway or should be (QQ7)

I think we need to regain our friendliness and open our doors. Irish people are always shown hospitality and it would be nice if we could return the favour (QQ26)

friendliness and charm are important symbols for the Irish as it is a lovely thing to be known as (QQ30)

I think showing friendliness and helping other countries with aid work is important in showing Ireland actually cares and isn't just money grabbing (QQ125)

I think being friendly to tourists and just other people in general is the best way of showing Irishness (QQ131)

friendliness (QQ149)

being friendly (QQ319)

friendliness, helpful and kindness (QQ326)

being friendly and hospitable to everyone, whether they are tourists or natives (QQ333).

Certainly Frank, in response to the opening focus group statement, could appreciate the coupling of welcoming and friendly:

Yeah I suppose it's a good thing [Irish identity being viewed as positive]... Yeah I guess, at least its ok to be considered friendly or welcoming as compared to like, I don't know some unfriendly place where no one talks to each other. In Dublin you can always end up meeting someone you know around the place its small enough I guess we can be like that [friendly]. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

We saw above that the notion of craic was placed by McNally as 'central to the Irish character' (2005:19) and how focus groups themselves could often be played out in a craic setting suggesting that practicing this notion of craic was indeed important in how young people conducted themselves. The experience from the focus groups would also suggest that friendliness, Frank's 'we can be like that', can be appreciated as also 'central to the Irish character', or at least central to how young people conducted themselves within focus groups.

Focus groups may often have been engaged with as *a bit of craic* but it could also be appreciated that the research - even when there was radical disagreement between members - usually felt like it was conducted in essentially a friendly atmosphere, with a particularly open and friendly attitude towards the researcher. Though it can be argued that my authority as both an adult and an outsider might have assured me a friendly welcome, what can also be picked up from the groups is how generally friendly people were to each other. However though groups

may have been essentially conducted in a friendly atmosphere young people can practice some unfriendly hierarchical discrimination. As with welcoming it can be suggested that being friendly is a selective process, certainly with a group at B2 School being friendly seemed to apply more so to fellow homogenised white Irish people than to people who may fall outside of this category.

It can be seen that there is some selectivity in being friendly but this should not hide the fact that many young people typically understand themselves to be friendly. Responding to the negative comment from the student at A3 School (QQ78) a grouping in A4 School emphasises the friendliness in Ireland as a response to these criticisms:

Jane - But we are very friendly I think.

Mary - But the majority are. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Mary lays an emphasis upon the majority, not the totality. It is rather understandable that not everyone can be friends with everyone else in Ireland or Dublin - indeed some antagonism seems to exist on Mary's part towards Jane - but the suggestion that Irish people are generally inclined towards friendliness is certainly accepted as a widespread theme within Irish identity. Though friendliness may not be a universal trait of being Irish it can be seen as something of a common trait in being Irish. However, as with notions of the craic or welcoming, there is an understanding that not everyone shares this friendliness and importantly some students when asked on '*the power to change one thing about Irish society*' directly challenged the friendliness notion and wanted to see it more widely practiced:

[change] Racism, because it's a very big issue and it effects the Irish 'friendly' reputation. I always hear a alot of discrimination against refugees and foreign immigrants (QQ36)

[change] racism because foreign people think that the Irish are friendly people but if they knew what is really going on it would change their view completely (QQ212)

Unfriendly (QQ212)

I would love to know where all the friendliness has gone, people used to say hello to everyone whether they knew them or not, now a days everyone is judging everyone on looks (QQ213)

Irish people are known to be friendly and helpful but lately Irish people have become snotty and too busy to even give a friendly smile (QQ326)

Though some of these comments may suggest a romanticised reading of one-time Irish sociality - 'people used to say hello to everyone whether they knew them or not' - they do point at how young people can understand friendliness as at least once an ingrained feature of Irish society, while now increasingly challenged by social developments making 'Irish people... snotty'. There is certainly some understanding from young people that the positive image of Irish identity - particularly when positioned as applying to *all* Irish people - is not in fact shared by all Irish people and that some instances of behaviour are certainly implied to be highly unwelcoming and unfriendly.

#### ***6.1.4 Internationalisation of identity reinforcement***

We have already seen that the notion of friendliness is seen as important when young people elaborate upon notions of Irishness but the relationship between how Irishness is projected internationally helps to strongly reinforce this positive sensing of Irishness. This loading of the internationalisation of Irishness is more than simply reinforcing the positive image of being Irish but points at how perceptions in what constitutes being Irish has itself altered. This is well captured by Laffan and O'Donnell when they write about changes in post 1960s Irish society:

The change in Irish culture and identity since 1960 might be described as a move from a relatively homogeneous, closed, Catholic culture since Independence, to an open, pluralist, culture today. That the change was not so much a change from one fixed identity to another, as a move from a fixed identity - a strong Catholic nationalism defined by opposition to England - to multiple identities (1998:173).

Laffan and O'Donnell argue that the internationalisation of Irishness - both how people in Ireland are affected by various global influences and how people outside Ireland can be affected by Irish cultural influences - deeply affects understandings of Irishness. Certainly for the young people involved in this research being Irish is seen as loaded with international goodwill on the part of a projected Generalised International Other towards Irish people, which for young people, encourages a reinforcing identification within the theme of *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*:

Ciara - People talk to you more [if they think you are Irish]. When, I remember, we were in Spain like we were talking to these Spanish French people guys whatever and this guy said he was English and they were kind of like “Oh” they were rude. They always associate English people as being rude in Spain and they were like really nice to us

Esther - People think we're good craic.

Nora - Yeah we're friendly and stuff.

Ciara – We're not all rude and everything like the English people were. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

It seems that a key element of how young people regard their Irishness is the positive international currency that Irishness is regarded to hold. There is some expectation that the Irish are ‘good craic’, ‘friendly and stuff’, and particularly more approachable, as ‘People talk to you more’ than other national groups, with the English cited by Ciara as facing some hostility.

This international relationship essentially involves two inter-related processes; internationalisation within Ireland and internationalisation of Ireland and Irishness. The internationalisation within Ireland is encountered, for instance, by how students may be welcoming and friendly towards non-Irish students within their school sites. Some schools engaged with international student exchanges and showed how students themselves made attempts to make fellow international students feel welcomed - as in A4 School where students hold a birthday parties for exchange students for instance. The internationalisation within Ireland offers an opportunity for young people to be in contact with some form of cultural difference that can be marked in a positive way - by being friendly or welcoming to non-Irish born fellow students. The internationalisation within Ireland is not simply evident within the school site but is also evident from students' own backgrounds - the 22.4% (N=79) of students who have at least one non-Irish born parent or the 7.4% (N=26) of students who were not born in Ireland or the 66.6% (N=235) of students who have non-Irish born friends - but also in wider social processes - from inter-cultural residential areas to work-places and social sites. However though school and social sites may have become increasing internationalised it is the latter form of internationalisation - the internationalisation of Ireland and Irishness - that seems far more important than the former in how young people negotiate and construct Irishness.

A sense of the internationalisation of Irishness - and how Irishness may be understood by a Generalised International Other - is almost an ever-present feeling whenever young people travel outside Ireland:

Niamh – When I'd go away my parents would be kind of like when they go away, they would like to experience the culture of the country they wouldn't be the ones going to the Irish pub they'd be like "I'm on holiday to get away from Ireland and soak up the other culture". So my holidays would be a lot like that but I just find in general, if you're in a restaurant, hotel, talking to people so where are you kind of from, "Oh Ireland yeah great I know this person there, I have a friend who lives there".

Janet – Yeah I know.

Niamh – Always this, like everything comes back to Ireland. Everyone's kind of like you know, 'My friend who I went to college with is living in Dublin for a while', whatever you generally always get...

Janet – Yeah you do like.

Niamh – ...A very positive response. People are like 'I know this person in Ireland I'd love to go to Connemara one day'. You know the random kind of general kind of positive feedback.

Janet – Because we wouldn't really know, if someone came up to me and I'm Swedish.

Niamh – And it's 'My good friend in Stockholm'.

Janet – Wouldn't really, like at all. But people about Ireland are always like, 'I'd love to go see it I heard Dublin was great'.

Janet – Especially Americans, Jesus.

Niamh – But being like in France and Spain places like that, that it's just a general kind of thing, I just find from foreigners we get a positive response. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Obviously a determining impact upon views towards Irish identity is the international perception and placement of Irish people, understood as social and friendly. It is for Niamh, a 'general kind of positive feedback' that is built upon the amount of goodwill the Generalised International Other may hold towards Ireland. It is a goodwill shaped by how people express some positive



contact with Ireland and how Ireland has established a positive international profile out of all proportion to the actual size of the Irish population. For example considering the celebrations of St. Patrick's Day, it is a testimony to the symbolism of this Day that not only is it marked in Ireland as a public holiday but that other countries also mark the day as a public holiday - for instance in Montserrat and two Canadian Provinces ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St. Patrick's Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Patrick's_Day)). Of course St Patrick's Day is celebrated beyond its formal recognition as a public holiday across many cities in North America, in England, Scotland and in at least 8 other European countries and also further afield in Australia, Asia and indeed Bahrain (<http://www.irishabroad.com/events/stpatrickevents.asp>). There cannot be many countries that enjoy this type of goodwill and it is difficult to imagine Independence Day or St. George's Day being celebrated in a similar vein to that of St. Patrick's Day in so many different countries. Certainly the symbolic significance of *St. Patrick's Day* is firmly accepted by young people. From the questionnaire results it can be seen that 85.8% (N=303) of the Generalised Other were considered to regard *St. Patrick's Day* as either symbolically *Very Important* or *Important* as compared to a similarly high figure for young people themselves at 82.2% (N=290). As news commentary on the day itself usually has some input from parades outside Ireland it would be difficult to miss how this can reinforce a sense of positive goodwill towards the Irish from a Generalised International Other.

Niamh's response to the initial positive statement on Irishness opening all focus groups emphasised the positive internationalising of Irishness:

Worldwide we do kind of have opinion, you know good friendly craic. We know how to balance our work life, work hard for our money, well educated, at the same time we go out and have craic and are well liked internationally. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Again the notion of 'good friendly craic' that is firmly grounded by the 'balance' that the Irish can take towards 'our work life' is reaffirmed by being 'well liked internationally'. What is somewhat remarkable is how closely Niamh's reading of Irish identity follows Keohane and Kuhling's suggestion that 'contemporary affluent Irish' identity is fundamentally experienced as an ability to 'speak within the vernacular of the local, and espouse cherished values of community, friendship family and hard work, yet be equally at home in the global, and an object of desire on the international stage' (2004:93). Young people forthrightly embraced a

particularised Irishness – one that in its immediacy regards Irishness as a positive identification – which is strongly informed by young peoples’ perceptions of Irishness from an international perspective. Janet, also from A3 School, expresses this notion succinctly:

Janet – People love the Irish though... I was [working] in the [popular Dublin City centre pub] over the summer and people were – tourist place like – so people were like they just want to take photos of you because you’re Irish... They come in like and say what are you having and what’s the most Irish thing here like. They’d always want the Irish stew and the Guinness they want to take off a bit of the bog and take it home with them.

Darragh - People are friendly towards Irish people and they think you’re friendly and like they talk about their family and stuff.

Jo – And do you think that people think that the Irish are friendly when abroad?

Darragh - Depends on where you go I suppose.

Niamh – It is a stereotype but it is kind of true. Because I think in general a lot of Irish people are quite open. They do like to talk to other people they are quite extroverted than people in general you know. I think you know we are in that kind of thing like the Irish would be the people who’d want to go out and get involved. It is stereotypes, like with the Germans. We all have these stereotypes you know preconceptions of nations whatever so it’s kind of hard, maybe I’ll have these kinds of notions but maybe I don’t know Germans or whatever. Say I was in New York in the summer and we went on a thing - a horse and carriage drive - around the area and talking to the guy who’s driving us and he’s saying that the area we were in is all English or German and he’s saying I love seeing the Irish or the English, they come up over and chat to me, and I was like the Germans they don’t like to chat as much. There is that kind of perception but I think it is a stereotype but I think it has a degree of truth to it as well. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Though Darragh, like Sandra and Kelly, can see a problem in affirming all Irish people as universally friendly it can be seen that Ruairí accepted Niamh and Janet’s international understandings that place the Irish as friendly:

It's pretty much the same as Niamh and Janet just generally feel they [Generalised International Other] can talk to you a lot easier than they can German like. They [non-Irish people] just feel a lot more chatty around Irish people than usual I suppose.

Quite obviously the framing of Irishness around *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness* is reinforced through international contacts and perceptions. Though Frank McNally's book *Xenophobe's guide to the Irish*, like Eagleton's *The Truth about the Irish*, takes a humorous look at the Irish, McNally certainly highlights the international expectation of the Irish that 'People expect them [the Irish] to be talkative and funny and the life and soul of the party' (2005:11). As McNally rightly notes 'There's always an element of performance involved in being Irish abroad' (2005:11-12); the performance being one that emphasises the themes involved in *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*. Young people rarely suggested any negative international perception of the Irish:

Janet – People love the Irish though... particularly the Scottish.

Niamh – Yeah very positive, generally, attitude when you're abroad.

Sandra's reaction to the A3 School student's negative positioning of the Irish with 'That's a bit harsh not fair like who hates Ireland?' similarly enforces the notion that 'People love the Irish'. From A1 School Tom and Martin also pointed towards the international perspective as supportive of positive identification:

Tom - Sure we're well known for it like, being fun people aren't we?

Martin - Everyone loves the Irish. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though Tom may appear to subsume the stereotyped notion of Irishness - equating 'fun' with being Irish - it should be noted that Tom has lived a number of years outside Ireland and in a number of different countries – "I lived in America, I lived in England, I lived in France, Spain" - so it is possible his social experiences outside Ireland may be strongly informing his sense of Irishness as 'being fun'. From the other group in A1 School it was suggested that living in another country *did* inform and reinforce a sense of Irishness around craic:

Christopher – I lived in France before. I was around lots of different nationalities and whenever I said to the teachers and stuff that I was Irish and all, I always had nice feedback. They basically thought I was an alcoholic. Basically they just

thought I was generally good craic, they have a lot of positive things to say about Irish people.

Jo - Had they been here?

Christopher - No they had just met people from Ireland before and they just said they were genuinely nice people and some of them have been to Dublin and said it was a great atmosphere and good night life around Dublin. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

We can see that Christopher, though celebrating Irishness, also points towards the stereotypical linkage of the Irish with alcohol. Lee, from this same focus group picked up immediately upon this stereotyped positioning:

Lee - Yeah but like do you not think everybody sees us as absolute drunk loudmouths like?

Paul - Like most countries, most nationalities love Irish people, like Irish people, I don't even know why sometimes.

One of the reasons why 'most nationalities love Irish people' may be in the perceived understanding of not being English. Damien, also from this group, emphasised the currency in being considered Irish as against being English when he was in France:

Well say you go to France and people think you're English and they hate you, and then when you tell you're Irish they love you... we had to put a sticker on our car saying we were Irish cause everybody didn't like us.

The image the students generally take of Irishness interpreted internationally is overwhelmingly positive, but comparatively drawn:

Nell - I think people do like the Irish cause when we were in America they liked us being Irish they like asked us stuff about Ireland and they liked it. It wasn't thought of as a bad thing that we were Irish if anything it was an advantage being Irish over in America on a holiday.

Sean - The worst thing when you go to America and you say you're Irish and they say "Do you know Sally?" And just leave it at that. That's the way it goes. Every take is different; every nation has a different take on every nation. That's the way it is, the Irish with England, French Irish. You can't say that being Irish is an

advantage no matter where you go in Europe. Like the Austrians could hate the Irish for no apparent reason.

Peter - Everybody pretty much hates the English. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Sean, and indeed other focus group participants like Lee, could engage with the idea that being Irish could not be a positive thing in all social settings it is notable that students did not draw upon any instances where being Irish might be seen as a disadvantage. It can generally be seen that students make the assumption that being Irish holds a particular currency in an international context, though it can be limited to essentially unnamed national assumptions. When quizzed on why the Irish may be considered favourable by international standards, answers pointed towards emigration and again, simply, the craic:

Christopher - Banter.

Damien – So many people emigrated so most people are part Irish... You talk to any American and they'll tell you they're part Irish.

Paul - When you're away they're so used to English people and then when you say you're Irish they're happy with something different.

Christopher - Genuine Irish people [because they are friendly, welcoming and good craic] are rare as well compared to most other nationalities. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Peter from A3 School situated a hierarchy of international favourability establishing that 'Everybody pretty much hates the English'. Paul's comparative positioning of another national grouping - again the English - was also noted in a group from A4 School, implying that international perceptions are comparatively formed - against the English - and hierarchicalised:

Jo – Do you think there's any currency in being Irish abroad? You know when you've been abroad you're in France and people think you're English and you say 'No I'm Irish.

Emma - I hate that.

Wendy - That's horrible

Sandra – I was away and my mam goes to this fella 'oh Ireland'

Jenny – They all hate the English.

Pauline – When I was in America like Ireland so many of you are from the UK.

Jenny – The UK!

Wendy – In Australia they like said English like and I said Ireland and they said it's all the same when its not.

Kelly - Yeah like where you from Ireland, that's ok like it's not England.

...

Jo – Well you know what I mean do you think there's a currency in being Irish abroad? People will assume you're friendly...

Pauline – They love that in general [Turks] they have brown eyes they love blue eyes.

Wendy - Obsessed with red hair, yeah that's like the sign of the devil or something in South America.

Jo - Do you'se understand what I mean about currency?

Wendy - Yeah they're way more friendly if they think you're from Ireland.

Pauline - Guess it's much safer to be Irish not English.

Sandra - They can't really say bad stuff about being from Ireland. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Pauline's instance of 'safer' certainly points towards Irish people as understood internationally as politically removed from international militarism and can also be seen as overlapping with Andy's reason why there may be international goodwill towards Irish people:

We're a neutral country so we're not really hated, war crimes or anything so not really [hated]. Though stereotypes of being drunks and stuff.

This 'stereotypes of being drunks and stuff' is a stereotype of being friendly and non-aggressively drunk rather than a stereotype of drunken aggression - which can be placed against the English by both a Generalised International Other and by some young people researched. Janet certainly feels that there is some mode of persuasion towards the Irish that allow the Generalised International Other distinguish Irishness from Englishness:

Difference between the English and Irish is always emphasised. If someone says to you are you English, a French person, no I'm Irish they go I'm so sorry and you're like I don't care. You know I think that's bigger to people outside England and Ireland possibly.

Though the Irish and English national difference may be more immediately expressed as meaningful outside Ireland - the international understanding of *the Irish* may still be informed by the Irish as engaged in a national liberation struggle from the British state for instance - it can be seen that a *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness* strongly informs constructions of Irishness which is reinforced by international perceptions of Irishness.

## 6.2 Conclusion

It was seen in Chapter 2 that theoretically a naturalisation of identity can be often emphasised in how people may negotiate their views towards nation identity. This chapter has emphasised that the most immediate naturalised sense of Irishness can be drawn within a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. Understanding Irish identity as innately negotiated is then still present on a general level for many young people, but obviously the core elements comprising this innateness has fundamentally moved from the constituent sites of the Traditional Paradigm's understanding - away from religion or diffuse Gaelicism as the source and meaning of identity - to radically different constituent sites. The *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* powerfully marks how many young people receive and project Irishness. When a cultural symbol like *the Irish language* could be seen as profoundly contested within young peoples' sensing of Irishness, the positive understandings established by the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* acts to generally ground a collective sense of Irishness that seemingly denotes a widespread meaning - indeed essence for some young people - of what is implied by Irishness.

Irishness, for many young people, is still highly congruent with notions grounded in welcoming, friendliness and fun-loving. This certainly suggests a process of dis-embedding and re-embedding of certain identificatory factors that have enjoyed an established association with Irishness. We saw in chapters 2 and 3 how a particular symbolic selectivity operates towards collective identification and it would be surprising, for any national identity or grouping, to collectively emphasise self-understood negative social identifications. A self-presentation of Irishness suggesting the Irish are dour, humourless, inhospitable, malevolent or disobliging would hardly encourage collective identification and an aspiration to personally identify with Irishness. Indeed we have already got some impression of how situating Irishness as bounded

within a Catholic and Gaelic nation has acted to distance young people from that sense of Irishness.

Though young people can obviously engage with how the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* is itself unevenly practiced - it may be *more welcoming* or *more friendly* for some people in some instances for example - it can certainly be eluded to that its conceptualisation is a commonly shared general approach informing what is implied in being Irish. Even when young people can critically engage with the idea of Irishness many can also welcome this understanding of Irishness informed by the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. Though this characterisation of Irish identity may be tested with regard to how welcoming and how friendly young people actually are, it can still be understood that young people do view Irish identity as welcoming and friendly. However the individualisation of identity can be seen as working in both how the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* is welcomed but also in how it is free-floating and not necessarily evenly shared. Though generally young people see Irish identity within the frame of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* there is no connection with the idea that if you are *not good craic*, or *not welcoming* or *not friendly* that you are being Irish, rather you are being an individual.

There is no doubt that these positive factors of Irishness - welcoming, friendly and the craic - are identity affirming in the context of Irish modernity, particularly given the highly restrictive conceptualisation of Irishness around Catholicism or Gaelicisation considered in Chapter 1 and in the previous two chapters. This mode of understanding is certainly less negatively formatted than the Traditional Paradigm of Irishness - where *not being* a Catholic or *not being* aspirationally committed to Gaelicisation may have well elicited abuse and a questioning of one's claim to Irishness. The *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* gives Irishness some meaning after the cultural modernisation of Irish society which has seen both diffuse Gaelicism and the Catholic Church play a less central role in defining Irishness. When Irishness could historically be marked and assumed within religious or Gaelic cultural identity it can now be understood as marked by a much different modernised cultural identity emphasising a particularly solid meaning around notions like friendliness or welcoming. Though this marking suggests that Irish identification may be playful and open to dialogical encounters with difference it must also be seen that these factors hold substantially less ability to emotionally tie people to Irishness than Catholicism or Gaelicisation.



The *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* is central to and embedded in the process of how young people negotiate their Irishness. Though these markings may have less emotional power than those offered within the Traditional Paradigm of Irishness it is perhaps a consequence of modernity that these markers have been pushed from the periphery of Irish identification - even under the hegemony of the Traditional Paradigm Irishness enjoyed some association with friendliness and welcoming - to a more centralised position in how young people in Dublin construct Irishness. Irishness has changed and the constituents of Irishness have changed with the movement of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* into a more immediate and commonly shared sensing of Irishness. This movement is greatly impacted by the internationalisation within Ireland and the internationalisation of Irishness, both of which have helped cement a feeling of positive international disposition towards the Irish. Lee's statement that 'we think we're good craic' because 'a lot of people say we are. We don't just think it cause we say it. People do tell us', is widely shared. This highly positive reading of Irishness is affirmed by many young peoples' contact outside, as well as inside, Ireland. The ways in which young people may 'tell' themselves of how Irishness is celebrated will be considered in the following chapter where sports will be seen as enacting and mobilising the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*.

# Chapter 7

## Mobilising Irishness through Sports

The chapter will show that sports give an opportunity to fully express how the *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness* - strong positive sociability markers lending to an affirmative sense of Irishness as essentially placed around the notions of pleasurability, social and individual groundedness and accessibility - is fully articulated and mobilised. We saw that the *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness* is a particular process by which young people negotiate Irishness, and through looking at the positioning of Gaelic sports and soccer and assessing their importance in the construction of a popular national consciousness and what this can say of identity, it will be shown how sports help underpin, interconnect and reinforce the positive view of identity expressed through this *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*. It will also be shown that sports unquestionably allow for a collective experience that can help promote an understanding of a particular Irish identity and indeed it is often sports that are placed in the forefront as evidence of a national consciousness that emphasises the expression of a positive Irish identity.

The examination of Gaelic sports will show how these sports have been historically privileged as offering some sense of belonging and rootedness to Irish identity and have unquestionably helped locate Irish sporting identity as highly distinguishable from other national sporting identities and activities. In this chapter it will be seen that Gaelic sports continue to perform this role of differentiating Irish identity from other national groupings. However though Gaelic sports are unquestionably important in differentiating Irish identity a more pronounced meaning within sports is found in how young people negotiate support for the Irish soccer team. It will be shown that the behaviour of Irish soccer fans is felt to be a particular expression of the core values within young peoples' sense of Irish identity; that Irishness is co-operative, friendly

and enjoyable. Before examining how young people themselves may understand sports it is important that we recognise how important sports can be in contemporary societies and consider some theoretical insights into how sports can mobilise identity. We shall begin by examining theoretical understandings of the significance of sport and then consider how important sport is as an identity marker within young people's frame of reference.

## 7.1 The Importance of Sport

Sports are for many people a permanent ever-present emotional concern shaping both individual and collective identity. The importance of sporting symbols in shaping identity is emphatically emphasised by Joseph Bradley when he highlights the centrality of sporting symbols in promoting a common identity:

The importance of symbols has been crucial to people through history, and sport has a central role in the manufacture and sustenance of many of the symbols which have significance for groups of people, regardless of size, constituency or identity (1998:3).

Be it a specific loyalty towards a given rugby or soccer club, or even beyond the particulars of club loyalties to a particular sport itself - rugby in New Zealand, cricket in Pakistan, baseball or boxing in Cuba or Gaelic sports in Ireland - each can suggest a particular symbolic meaning of identification. Certainly an appreciation of the importance of the symbolic mobilisation of identity, at an international site can be read in Mark O'Brien when he writes that:

Sport at international level is much more than just a business, it is also a ceremonial and highly visible expression of shared national identity that acts as a collective ritual of shared national identity... The spectacle of national symbols such as flags or anthems at international sporting fixtures creates such a sense of affiliation and loyalty in even the most fair-weather supporters (2004:56).

How Ireland and Irishness can be symbolised in sports, through the importance of the Irish flag, in the emblem badge of a sporting association or in individual sports people, like 'Sonia O'Sullivan... because she never gives up' (QQ321), is highly significant. Sports can bring *the Nation* together, reinforcing some sense of collective common experiences:

Cultural identity knits together individuals, classes, genders, religious groups and ethnicities, helping them to make sense of their common experiences and often enabling them to imagine themselves as a nation (Reid and Jarvie, 2000:93).

Given the central importance sports can play in shaping and articulating self and collective identities it is rather remarkable that sports for so long were a neglected area of sociological concern. Dunning (1999) makes an explicit distinction in how academia was once quite prone to dismissing the significance of sports in the construction of identity. For Whelan, in Ireland, there is a particularised classed element regarding the lack of attention that has been paid to sports:

As a post-colonial nation, we [the Irish] inherited the traditional British snobbery to sport: it was something the working-classes did while the intelligentsia got on with the important matters of politics, society and culture. As a result, sport was seen as peripheral, not part of the make-up of society and national identity (2006: xi).

Sports, of course, are culture and for the millions, not thousands, of individuals in Ireland engaged with different sporting activities on different levels - whether playing a sport or watching their team on television or attending games - the notion that sport is not a worthy area of sociological concern, or that sports are not an important component making up *who I* or *who we are*, might rightly be greeted with derision. Surely the millions of people who attend GAA games or the tens of thousands of Irish soccer and rugby supporters who travel to see their teams play, or the thousands of Irish people who attend Cheltenham or who travel weekly from Ireland to attend and support English and Scottish soccer teams suggests something of the significant emotional investment people place in sports, and importantly it suggests something of how people view their activities as both very important and very meaningful. A young female student at C8 School saw as a significant expression of Irishness, the 'getting involved in Irish sports and supporting Irish soccer teams is important in showing Irishness' (QQ324). Should we consider this young person's understanding of something expressing Irishness as a valid understanding, given the number of people involved in sports, or simply dismiss her claim?

Sports are now increasingly acknowledged as both a worthy area of study and as an important mechanism that can fundamentally shape identities:

The connection between modern sports practice, expressions of nationalism and a cultural identity has an established history. In the twentieth century, sporting

contests provided tangible contexts through which a sense of belonging to a national community could be expressed (Reid and Jarvie, 2000:88).

What may have been true for the Twentieth century seems doubly true for the early Twenty-first century as sports seem to further colonise people's leisure time. In Ireland today, as generally in other societies, there is some recognition of the values sports play in developing a sense of collective identity and developing or bolstering a sense of collective pride in the Nation.

Some of the values sport can promote are suggested by Mike Cronin when he points out that sports are:

a form of national popular culture, a forum for creation, expression or maintenance of senses and ideals of identity, a form of business, and a central point of focus for groups within and outside of any given society or nation (1999:51).

Sports can bring the Nation to a collective point of attention with sports having been identified as offering 'a signifying practice and symbol of a particular way of [national] life, [sport] provides what might be described as a tangible context through which ethereal ideas associated with nations, nationalisms and aspects of cultures may be given meaning' (Reid and Grant, 2000:93). The 'tangible context' of hundreds of thousands of people welcoming the Irish soccer teams to Dublin after each World Cup can be appreciated as can the 'tangible context' of Irish identity, regarding what some may consider the self-appointed custodians of Irish sporting essentialism, that can be easily seen in the GAA's Official Guide when it states:

The primary purpose of the GAA is the organisation of native pastimes and the promotion of athletic fitness as a means to create a disciplined, self-reliant national-minded manhood. The overall result is the expression of a people's preference for native ways as opposed to imported ones (quoted in Doak, 1998:33).

Sports offer an opportunity to express what may be *imagined* in and of the Nation. It can be seen for instance that the GAA views its socio-cultural mission as nationally binding and promoting an Irish cultural identity that emphasises 'native ways as opposed to imported ones' attempting to construct a definite picture of Irishness placed in 'a disciplined, self-reliant national-minded manhood'. When Giddens points out that 'In traditional cultures, the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations'

(1991:37), it is difficult not to see the GAA's ritualising of the past - its self-positioning as organically nativist - as something akin to maintaining a 'traditional cultural' within the ideological frame of the GAA that attempts to construct a very precise understanding of the Irish Nation. The cultural identity attributable to the GAA is nationally orientated:

The GAA was founded with nationalism at the forefront of its agenda, an agenda that has changed little since 1884. As a sporting body the GAA is organized across the thirty-two counties of Ireland and as such fails to recognize the fact that Northern Ireland is legally part of another nation (Cronin, 1999:20).

Though the GAA has unquestionably changed in character since Cronin's characterisation - the opening and playing of non-Gaelic games in Croke Park for example - that the Nation is still fore-grounded in the consciousness of the GAA remains a valid point; Gaelic sports continue to offer a concrete representation of the Nation, which will be further highlighted below.

In highlighting the power that sports, like Gaelic sports, have in offering people a sense of meaning, Eric Dunning lists three important functions that sports perform:

(1) [sports] provide a source of meaning in life; (2) act as a focus of social identification; and (3) offer experiences which are analogous to the excitement and emotional arousal generated in war and other 'serious' situations like 'being in love' (1999:221).

For Bale, quoted in Cronin, 'sport is, after war, probably the principal means of collective identification in modern life' (1999:51). This is a point picked up by Dunning:

along with religion and war, sport represents one of the most successful means of collective mobilization humans have so far devised. That appears to be the case because of the combination of representation and excitement- generating function that sport can perform (1999:221).

Having theoretically grounded the importance of sport in helping construct and sustain identity I shall now turn my attention towards a consideration of Gaelic sport and what this may say of Irish identity.

### ***7.1.1 Gaelic Sports***

Gaelic sports helped established a sense of Irishness essentialised through Gaelic-ness of football, hurling and handball, as highly distinctive sporting activities, could almost effortlessly

distinguish the social practice of Irishness from other national identities. The specific uniqueness of Gaelic sports - how they compare to other field games - cannot be lost sight of, nor indeed can the widespread popularity of the games themselves. Gaelic sports remain the most popular games in Ireland – through both spectator numbers and membership of clubs – but increasingly face intense competition from other sports, notably rugby and soccer. The position Gaelic sports hold within the national consciousness can be appreciated from Tom Humphries characterisation of their place in contemporary Ireland:

The GAA was always too big and too firmly rooted in the Irish imagination to ever get itself washed away by the tides of a soccer team's fortunes. Gaelic games are more than mere sport, they are politics and culture, recreation and entertainment. They are the unifying force and the identifying force throughout our country. The games are the thread, which runs through all our lives. As surely as being a small island nation has defined our character, so the playing of Gaelic games has become an expression of that character (1996:6).

Even those people who have no interest in Gaelic sports would probably concede that Humphries (1996) – judging from the contemporary popularity of the games – remains more right than wrong in what he writes. Humphries 'thread' is also a point emphasised by Bradley in positing the important focal position of the GAA within Irish society:

The G.A.A. is an element in the sociology, history, culture and political nature of Ireland. It forms part of the story of the people of Ireland, including its diaspora, and it reflects on activities which run deep in Irish consciousness (Bradley, 1998:3).

Gaelic sports 'commanding presence' is not simply that the sports are the most popular sports in Ireland, but in how the games can represent the continuation of a highly distinctive national sporting tradition that can even link the suggested sentiment of Irish historical struggle - the will to maintain a differentiated national identity - with an understanding of *being Irish* in contemporary Ireland. Emphasising the fundamental position of importance the GAA holds in Irish society, Barrie Houlihan highlights the difficulty in attempting to actually distinguish the practice of Irish social policy from the GAA itself:

The extent to which the GAA is woven into the fabric of Irish society, religion and politics makes it difficult to talk of the organisation's role in policy-making,

as this conceptualisation implies a degree of distance between itself and the institutions of state. The complementarity between the geographical structure of the GAA and the parish structure of the Catholic church, and the significance of involvement in Gaelic sport in the advancement of political careers suggests an unconscious empathy between key power holders and the governing body (1997:161).

There is no doubt that an ‘unconscious empathy’ can be still argued to exist. Why for instance, on All-Ireland Days - or with other important Gaelic matches - do ‘key power holders’ make such an effort to attend a Gaelic match? Why is there, certainly for some ‘power holders’, a need to be seen at a Gaelic game when there appears a far lesser need to attend a basketball, netball game or a cricket match, or to be seen as highly visible at a soccer or rugby game? However it is not only the ‘unconscious empathy’ of elites that may be argued to exist but the picture of essentialised Irishness presented by the GAA can be argued to still impact the popular imagination of *the Nation*.

It is argued, by Doak, that ideologically the GAA ‘continues to articulate a strident and ‘traditional’ cultural nationalism, an essentialised ‘anachronistic’ Irishness where nation and island are one and the same’ (1998:26). Doak positions himself as understanding the GAA to articulate ‘an unchanging vision of the nation’ (ibid) which, to a certain degree, remains readily apparent in the GAA. It is not simply the obvious organisational tension with the Northern Ireland state that can be cited but also, for instance, the continuation of an amateur ethos within the GAA. Given the intensive training regime of top flight Gaelic players, and the commitment that playing Gaelic sports demands from county selected players, it is a remarkable achievement that the Association has retained its amateur ethos given the huge revenues that matches generate. The fact that Gaelic players make no comparative financial gains - set against the professionalisation of rugby and soccer in Ireland - from playing in particular matches continues to mark the GAA and Gaelic sports as exceptional. This amateur uniqueness of the GAA could be argued to present an understanding of *The Nation*, and its culture, as unconcerned with financial self-interests and instead emphasising a collective shared national interest.

For Doak the nationalising operation of the GAA is evident in both the organic constitution of the GAA and also in how the GAA is constructed by wider social processes:



nationalism and tradition have become modernity's twin boggy men... modernity always requires its backward other, and such backwardness has to be discursively constructed. Stereotypically, the GAA is invoked to represent the worst, most regressive Irishness (Doak, 1998:26)

The problem, not so much then as now, is that, as David McWilliams rightly highlights, ‘at some stage over the past ten years, GAA became chic’ (2005:272). The GAA holds the most advanced sporting grounds in the country, it attracts millions from revenue in corporate sponsorship and match receipts, and when the GAA is described as ‘chic’ it certainly suggests a progressive sporting marker of identity. The following section will begin the consideration of the importance of the GAA for young people.

### ***7.1.2 Symbolic Significance of the GAA***

From the questionnaire results, on the question of ranking symbols, it can be seen that, unlike the *Catholic Church* or the theme of *the Irish language*, young people mark the GAA, particularly for the Generalised Other, with an embedded depth of symbolic meaning, somewhat emphasising Bradley’s reading of ‘Irish consciousness’:

***Table 7.1 Symbolic Significance of the GAA***

Symbol of Irishness	Very Important	Important	Not Important
GAA for Me	23.8% (N=81)	33.5% (N=114)	37.9% (N=129)
GAA for Others	41.2% (N=140)	41.5% (N=141)	12.4% (N=42)

Given the central position sports enjoy in Irish life, and also given that Gaelic sports are typically considered one of the few successes of post-Independent Ireland’s cultural identity (Waters, 2004), it is perhaps expected that the majority of those sampled, 55.2% (N=195), regarded the GAA as signifying something either *Very Important* or *Important* to them personally about Irishness. However, as with symbolic markers considered in chapters 4 and 5, some sizeable disjuncture pertains between personal evaluations and those of the projected Generalised Other. It was found that young people considered 79.6% (N=281) of the Generalised Other as placing a *Very Important* or *Important* symbolic marking on the GAA as compared to 55.2% (N=195) for their own understanding. When just over one-third - 37.9% (N=129) - of young people marked

the GAA as personally *Not Important*, it is seen that the figure for the Generalised Other is a significantly lower 12.4% (N=42). This disparity between personal symbolic evaluation and that of the Generalised Other highlights how young people, once again, place greater symbolic mobilisations of Irish identity onto the Generalised Other, suggesting that though the games may ‘run deep’ they run deeper ‘in Irish consciousness’ for the Generalised Other than for young people generally.

A gender breakdown of the results highlights how privileged GAA is for the Generalised Other set against personal evaluations:

**Table 7.2 Gender breakdown in personal and Generalised Other symbolical attachment to the GAA<sup>5</sup>**

GAA	Very Important	Important	Not Important
For young males			
Personally	25% (N=38)	32.9% (N=50)	34.8% (N=53)
For Others	36.2% (N=55)	46.7% (N=71)	9.2% (N=14)
For young females			
Personally	22.3% (N=42)	34.6% (N=63)	40.9% (N=77)
For Others	45.2% (N=85)	37.2% (N=70)	14.9% (N=28)

Though it is seen that a majority of all cohorts do suggest personal symbolic identification in the GAA a far greater emphasis on symbolic significance is projected for the Generalised Other. An instance of this importance is evident with Esther, from A4 School, who comes from an environment in which the Generalised Other - indeed a Significant Other - is imbued with Gaelic sport involvement:

<sup>5</sup> R value of .000 for Personal symbolic attachment to GAA based upon Class, and R value of .002 for Personal symbolic attachment to GAA based upon Gender. R value of .012 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to GAA based upon Class, and R value of .000 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to GAA based upon Gender.

My Da's really into the GAA and hurling like not Gaelic [football]. And they're [Esther's family] still like that... My Da's really into Irish sports. Me and my brother play and the whole family all play. My Da's really into the hurling.

Though it could be understood that certainly some of the female emphasis upon the significance of the *GAA* for the Generalised Other could be related to emphasising sports, and particularly Gaelic sport, as very much embedded within male identity it can also be seen that young males also strongly emphasise a Generalised Other association with the *GAA*. Some 82.9% (N=126) of male students mark the *GAA* as symbolically either *Very Important* or *Important* to the Generalised Other compared to a personal ranking of 58% (N=88). Both cohorts clearly attribute symbolic significance to the *GAA* on a personal level but also more emphatically on the level of the Generalised Other.

Though there is strong similarities in evaluations - for instance in how personally significant males and females rank the *GAA* - when we consider class and gender together it can be seen that these factors clearly impacts personal symbolic identification but that all cohort continue to privilege the *GAA* as a factor of identity for the Generalised Other:

***Table 7.3 Gender and class breakdown in personal and Generalised Other symbolic attachment to the GAA***

GAA	Very Important	Important	Not Important
<i>Working class male</i>			
Personally	28.3% (N=34)	35.8% (N=43)	29.2% (N=35)
Generalised Other	37.5% (N=45)	43.3% (N=52)	10.8% (N=13)
<i>Working class female</i>			
Personally	24.4% (N=31)	37.8% (N=48)	33.8% (N=43)
Generalised Other	38.6% (N=49)	41.7% (N=53)	16.5% (N=21)
<i>Middle Class Male</i>			
Personally	15.6% (N=5)	21.8% (N=7)	59.4% (N=19)
Generalised Other	31.2% (N=10)	59.3% (N=19)	6.2% (N=2)

*Middle Class Female*

Personally	18% (N=11)	25.8% (N=16)	51.6% (N=32)
For other	59% (N=36)	27.8% (N=17)	9.8% (N=6)

It is working class males students who personally place the greatest symbolic investiture in the GAA compared to all researched cohorts, with 64.1% (N=77) identifying the GAA as either *Very Important* or *Important*. The next group placing the most significant symbolic capital in the GAA is working class females, with 62.2% (N=79) claiming the GAA is either *Very Important* or *Important*. The working class evaluations compare quite markedly to that of both middle class cohorts where over half of each middle class cohorts - 59.4% (N=19) for males and 51.6% (N=32) of females - place the GAA as *Not Important* in their own personal understanding of Irishness. This class division towards the GAA is also evident regarding those students who listed Gaelic sports as played or watched in their leisure time; only one out of the nineteen respondents who listed Gaelic sports as something they followed in their leisure time were middle class.

However though young people may not evenly share in a common personal symbolic evaluation of the GAA it can certainly be seen that when the projected views of the Generalised Other are considered, young people - irrespective of gender or class backgrounds - show a great deal more in common towards understanding how significant the GAA may be in symbolising Irishness for the Generalised Other; all cohorts attribute a great deal of symbolic significance to the GAA for the Generalised Other's conceptualisation of Irishness. The relationship suggested by personal engagement is now completely reversed with middle class cohorts emphasising a greater level of symbolic significance projected onto the GAA for the Generalised Other than working class students. When 76.4% (N=97) of young working class females and 85% (102) of young working class males attribute a *Very Important* or *Important* symbolic significance to the Generalised Other, the figure for middle class male students and middle class female students is 90.5% (N=29) and 86.8% (N=53) respectively. This middle class projection is reflected in one particular comment on a questionnaire from a male student in A2 School, who *given the power to change one thing about Irish society* would remove:

the obsession with old Irish games and customs i.e. teaching Irish [language] in schools, obsession with GAA and no openness towards new sports. Overall, move Ireland into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (QQ8).

This comment not only, once again, directly addresses the central importance of sport in young people lives - this student offering basketball, though not a new sport it is certainly one that is under-resourced and under-publicised, as their first listed leisure activity - but points towards a negative perception of Gaelic sports.

Overall assessing how young people symbolically engage with the *GAA* it can be firstly emphasised that a significant number of young people did personally identify with the *GAA* as an important symbolic expression of Irishness. However though a majority of the sample do find symbolic significance in the *GAA* what is rather telling of the *GAA*'s fortunes in Dublin - it is not as popular in Dublin as in the rest of Ireland in general - is the high proportion of students who claim that personally the *GAA* represents nothing of Irishness to them; for male students the figure was 34.9% (N=53) and for young female students 40.9% (N=77). As well as the difference evident in gender evaluations the significance of the *GAA* can also be seen as impacted upon by class, with a minority of working class students - 31.8% (N=78) - seeing the *GAA* as *Not Important* for them personally but a majority - 54.8% (N=51) - of middle class young people regarding the *GAA* as *Not Important* in their own personal symbolic considerations of Irishness. Though the *GAA* may be a significant expression of Irishness that continues to connect with many people within their sense of Irishness it is obvious that a high number of young people do not find any symbolic significance in the *GAA* and do not feel any symbolic connection to the *GAA*.

However though personal evaluation may be impacted by class and gender the way in which the *GAA* is valued for the Generalised Other fundamentally shows that a majority of young people - irrespective of class or gender - regard the *GAA* as a significant marking of Irishness. There is a rather stark comparison between personal evaluation and the evaluation that young people projected onto the Generalised Other. Consistently young people - measured through class or gender - emphasise that symbolically the *GAA* is a significant marker of Irishness for the Generalised Other, and particularly significant when measured against the much lower levels of identification offered by young people themselves.

### ***7.1.3 The placement of GAA with young people***

The sense that the GAA is privileged in Irishness can be seen in some focus groups. Mark, from B2 School, neither follows Gaelic sports nor seems to understand how they are played - this could be because he has spent considerable time in England, where Gaelic sports have very limited penetration - he recalls how his parents would return to Ireland for some important Gaelic matches but also allows Mark to emphasise the importance of Gaelic sports:

Yeah I think it's really important [GAA]. Like my Dad and my Mum used always follow Galway like when we were living in England. I know they came home for some matches. I don't know what though, whatever that big one was a few years ago can't remember who they were playing but I know they won so they were home for that match. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though young people might not share the same symbolic understanding of the GAA as that attributable to their projection of the Generalised Other, one theme about the GAA understood by young people is its distinctiveness. This understanding that Gaelic sports can be attributed, in Cronin's terms about sports in general, a 'central point of focus' regarding Irish distinctiveness is a popular theme shared by many young people. Grace, also from B2 School, clearly sees a marked distinctiveness in Gaelic sports though she herself does not seem to be involved with the sport:

Well I don't play it but yeah I can see like how it can be important for people. Like it is only played in Ireland so it is kind of special you know but I'd never really watch it or care how Dublin do or anything. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

The formal distinctiveness of Gaelic sports from other popular field sports is quite evident - the playing areas are much larger than those of hockey, soccer or rugby pitches; points scoring differs; and unlike in soccer, all players are allowed handle the ball. This sporting distinctiveness of the GAA can encourage a certain mode of placing and reinforcing Irish uniqueness. A female student from A4 School commenting on the questionnaire about what she felt personally expressed Irishness, wrote:

I think the GAA is v[ery] important in showing Irishness - because it is unique to Ireland (QQ128).

The 'unique to Ireland' clearly emphasises the impression of an Irish distinctiveness. Though only two of the schools researched, A1 and C3 School, seemed to offer Gaelic sports as an extra-curricular activity - and though the students are seemingly far more inclined to attend soccer or rugby games if they attend sporting events at all - the continued privileging of Gaelic sports 'deep in Irish consciousness' is a definite theme for some focus group members. Mark, in talking about the games stated:

Yeah well I know my parents would think its [Gaelic games] important I don't really know what I feel I suppose it is. I know if you asked them they wouldn't shut up about how important it is, they worship it and I know they'd hate to see it gone so yeah I suppose I would think it's terrible if it's gone. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Dermot from the same group in B2 School, though not a player of Gaelic games did also endorse the distinctiveness of Gaelic sports:

I think it's a great sport like you know what I mean it's so Irish it's real important for Irish people you know and I love all the symbols and all. You know all that Celtic stuff did you ever see their badge like? You know the one with the cross if I ever get a tattoo its going be one of those Celtic crosses like. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

For Dermot it is not simply the 'great sport' itself that offers an understanding of his Irishness but the added symbolic value of the 'Celtic crosses'. Notwithstanding the obvious uniqueness of Gaelic sports - they are played in Ireland or by the Irish Diaspora - the popularity of Gaelic games in the Dublin area is certainly not as strong as in other urban areas like Cork or Galway. Even though a majority of the sample did find symbolic self-identification in the GAA one would expect that if a sample was taken from other urban areas in Ireland the level of self-identification would be a great deal higher.

What also affects the place of the GAA is the lack of connection young people seem to make with a uniquely Dublin identity. Though there is obviously some understanding that the GAA can stand for something *uniquely Irish* - particularly in the face of globalised homogenisation - the feeling that a Dublin team can stand for something *uniquely Dublin*, a Dublin identity markedly different as against the rest of the country, seemed largely absent. When I asked Mark jokingly if he would play for Dublin or Galway, Dermot interceded with

‘Better be Dublin or get out of the room’ and Mark replied ‘Ah yeah it would be Dublin defo’. But other than this exchange no great emphasis was ever placed - by any focus groups - on Gaelic sports somehow representing Dublin or implying a loyalty to Dublin. Indeed the only questionnaire comment that saw representing Dublin as important also connected this importance with sporting professionalism:

Play for Dublin and get paid (QQ251)

Indisputably some of this lack of identification with Dublin - and the Dublin football team and the GAA - relates to the county’s fundamental lack of sporting success.

However though young people in this research do not en masse actively spectate - through television or through attending matches - or even play Gaelic sports, one is still very much inclined to agree with Humphries that:

Today no teams fill Croke Park with quite the same regularity or enthusiasm as the Dublin footballers do. Even though it is more than a decade since the county last won an All-Ireland, it takes a run of just two wins in the summertime to set the city alight with expectation (2006:247).

Yet no focus group participants suggested that Gaelic was the only sport they followed nor, importantly, that it suggested a Dublin identity. Perhaps the de-emphasising of the local can be set against the fact that there are certainly increased alternative sporting channels of identification in Dublin – notably soccer but also rugby, hockey, basketball, snooker, golf etc. - and competing with and against these alternative sporting channels requires some level of sporting success and involvement. For instance young peoples’ sporting role model identification saw Roy Keane offered by 3.7% (N=13) of the sample and even Brian O’Driscoll got two mentions from students in C6 School, with one stating that ‘before I didn’t know what rugby was but after seen Brain I knew it was a good sport’ (QQ285). Significantly not one Dublin footballer or hurling player - past or present - was offered as a role model.

Though a Dublin identity may not be a central feature of the GAA students in A1 School, which is institutionally dominated by a rugby playing ethos, highlighted the distinctiveness and symbolism attached to Gaelic sports in its ability to emphasise the feeling of being Irish:

Tom - Like the way we got Gaelic – I hate it – but I like the way we have it, you know what I mean?

Ray - Identity.



Tom - Yeah that's what I mean exactly.

Jo - You'd feel like that, you dislike Gaelic but you're glad you have it? It's very distinct. You know the way it's a really distinct sport it's played here.

Tom - Just here... Like I tried playing whatever it's called the one with the stick.

Martin - Hurley.

Simon - Where are you from!

Eamon - Gaelic football is too much like rugby or soccer for you to feel Irish when you're playing it, but Hurley you would cause it's a completely different sport to any other sport you'd play. Like there's loads of skill and everything in it.

Tom - It's a bit late though [the age they start playing Gaelic sports in A1 School].

Ray - Yeah like people started [playing sport] when they were six, seven in this school and only introduced to rugby like and there's barely any [GAA] here. You've been here [A1 School] since junior infants, it was just rugby. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though Tom cannot even identify the game of hurling by name – 'the one with the stick' – he celebrates the fact that the game is both exclusively and popularly played in Ireland. Gaelic sports seem to represent to Tom an affinity marker within his Irish imagination whereby he can share an affinity with a cultural activity engaged in by others in Ireland, while not having any interest for that activity itself, indeed 'I hate it [Gaelic]'. Certainly Tom, who felt the world was becoming 'Americanised', could be understood to accept that the GAA gives 'Identity' to quote Ray, that perhaps offers some defence against Americanisation, which for Tom is 'everywhere you go'. Certainly Whelan sees the partial success of the GAA over the past ten years as a response to the notion of homogeneous globalisation:

As people begin to get lost in the globalisation of economies and societies, a positive symbol of oneself and one's country is needed as a badge and marker to stand out from the rest of the world. In searching for that, the GAA was perfect territory. The GAA is essentially a return to the local, to the parish and to the community, which is then represented on the national stage in the All-Ireland Championships (2006, 206-207).

Though the GAA may be some 'return to the local' - though again there were scant comments on a uniquely Dublin identity fostered by Gaelic sports - it can certainly be appreciated how Gaelic sports may be a defence against cultural homogenisation. What can also be seen from the above exchange is that Eamon identifies what Gaelic purists would consider the problematic lineage of Gaelic football, highlighting how 'Gaelic football' could be perceived as 'too much like rugby or soccer' but hurling is 'a completely different sport to any other sport you'd play' and *really* marks the distinctiveness of Irishness. As national identification implies some level of distinctiveness it is seen by Eamon that the sporting distinction of hurling reinforces this sense of national distinctiveness, particularly against the more popular and internationalised sports of 'rugby or soccer'.

When this A1 School group were asked if another school played exclusively Gaelic sports could they be considered more Irish than students in A1 School - where rugby and cricket seem the dominantly represented sports - Ray certainly felt other schools might be 'a bit more [Irish] yeah'. However Ray has a commitment to spectating Gaelic games - seemingly unlike other members of this group - so the sports were, of themselves, important to him. Ray's understanding of the notion that Irishness could be embedded in a school simply because it played Gaelic games was thoroughly rejected by Tom who then went beyond an equally shared Irishness to place his schooling environment - because of the historical linkages the school has to the Irish social elite - as 'even more Irish' than other schools if they were to popularly play Gaelic sports:

They're [other GAA playing schools] not more Irish [than us] it's just they play Gaelic... because we do have a lot of Irish aspects. It's like the way all our history goes back to like [historical figures who attended the school] and stuff like that, our [Irish] history. So they're not more Irish than us, they're just playing Irish sports. If we played Irish sports we'd be [more Irish] than them.

However, that sports may not necessarily lend themselves to a sensing of Irish distinctiveness is seen in a group from A4 School who demonstrated some mixed views upon the question of whether playing Gaelic sports or listening to Irish music would make them personally feel more Irish:

Kelly – Cause what the music does a bit, but not the sport.

Sandra - But when you go to matches and you're sitting in the crowd, it kind of makes you feel Irish.

Pauline - Gaelic is unique in the world. Australia has a bit of a version of it like. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Sandra feels that attending matches 'makes you feel Irish' and Pauline can recognise something of a frequent theme that 'Gaelic is unique in the world' quite obviously Kelly feels somewhat differently about how Gaelic sports could possibly connect with her sense of Irishness. Andy, from A3 School, saw nothing in playing Gaelic sports or speaking the language as developing his own sense of Irishness:

No way no chance [would playing Gaelic or speaking the Irish language make me feel more Irish]. Just cause, you don't have to like play Gaelic or like speak Irish to be Irish. I hate Gaelic and I'm useless at Irish but I'm still Irish. Some people play Gaelic which is completely fair enough. Just I don't think because you play Gaelic you feel, you know like, more Irish than playing football. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Andy's views seem more in keeping with the quantitative analysis where middle class males showed some distance from symbolic self-identification with the GAA, indeed Andy's school was one of only two schools that participated in both questionnaires and in focus groups. This methodological issue relating to the research sample should be highlighted. All the schools researched but two - B2 School and C1 School - are essentially schools located on the south-side of Dublin. An issue greatly affecting the GAA in Dublin is the lack of playing popularity for Gaelic sports but particularly on the south-side of the City compared to the more popularly played rugby but particularly compared to the popularly played and spectated soccer. One would perhaps expect a greater level of GAA penetration in self-identity if the sample was conducted in the north-central or north-inner City regions of Dublin - around Drumcondra or around Glasnevin for instance. However notwithstanding the geography of the sample, the GAA has a generally limited appeal in Dublin, both on the south and on the north-side of the city. The competition from domestic and international soccer - which will be covered later in this chapter - has certainly fundamentally affected the attitude Luke has taken towards the GAA as an organisation.

Luke, from B2 School, not only personally rejects playing Gaelic sports but describes the GAA as ‘cunts’ for delaying the playing of international soccer games at Croke Park:

Luke – But I wouldn’t be keen on the GAA [organisationally] look how long it took to get football into Croke Park.

Ryan – Gaa’s [the sport] alright.

Luke – Yeah that’s cool but like I wouldn’t play it.

Jo – Know anyone that plays?

Group - No.

Jo – Do you think it’s important to play or that it’s played?

Luke – No not really I don’t mind just that football is me game.

Jo – But you know how Gaelic sports are only played in Ireland and that they’re really distinctive?

Ryan – Yeah I’d say that.

Luke – GAA [the organisation] are cunts. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Quite clearly Luke’s views are informed by the resistance some GAA members had shown towards the playing of soccer – and rugby - in Croke Park. Luke obviously rejects the notion of *foreignness* that some traditionalist GAA members and supporters might attach to games like soccer and particularly the possibility of playing non-Gaelic games on Gaelic grounds. Luke is essentially indifferent to Gaelic sports - ‘that’s cool but like I wouldn’t play it’ - and though Ryan accepts the distinctiveness of Gaelic sports it is indicative of the lack of playing popularity of Gaelic sports in Dublin that no one in the group seems to know anyone who actually plays any Gaelic games.

When religion and the Irish language can generate highly charged emotionally responses - with religion it was typically emotionally negative and with the Irish language there was a mixture of both strong identification but also steadfast de-identification - Gaelic sports, even when considered as removed from young peoples sporting interests, as with Andy or Luke for instance, could be tolerated as marking Irishness. Young people do not seem to load Gaelic sports with the same kind of identity baggage that they can load the Irish language or religion. However there were some suggestions that a certain symbolism around the sport still retained an underlining nationalist message for some young people. Ray from A1 School, the school with the

formidable rugby playing ethos, unlike Luke expressed complete opposition to the then potential opening of Croke Park to non-Gaelic sports:

Ray - I hope soccer and rugby don't get in there [Croke Park] either, that would ruin the identity of Croke Park.

Tom - Yeah even though I'd love to see rugby played at Croke Park I wouldn't want it played in Croke Park. Does that make sense?

Ray - The English came in and shot and killed 13 people, their flag shouldn't be raised in Croke Park.

Tom – Yeah exactly, that's a good point. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Ray, of all focus group participants, was the one most involved in spectating Gaelic sports, though his main sporting outlet appeared to be coaching a junior soccer team. Ray, unlike Luke, attributes a particular Irish identity to Croke Park that involves maintaining the prohibition of more popular non-Gaelic sports in Dublin - particularly of course soccer - from being played in Croke Park. Obviously Gaelic sports and Croke Park can be seen as historically embedded for Ray within Irishness - events from the past mentioned by Ray where people were executed by British soldiers for instance - providing the GAA a connected surety with Irishness not supplied by hockey, netball or even for Ray with soccer. After all there were no Bloody Sundays committed on any cricket, soccer or netball pitches in Ireland. For Ray there is:

Something special about the GAA. You would see one flag up for the World Cup [in soccer] but in the Hill [section of Croke Park], any county that's in the final, just the colours of the flags. It's the best part of the GAA. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though Ray does engage with other sports, notably soccer, his attitude towards the GAA as 'Something special' seems to resonate with Bairner's 'cultural romantic nationalism'. The spectacle on 'the Hill' is indeed highly impressive, and no doubt for supporters highly emotional, and can certainly be seen for Ray to lend Gaelic sports a very 'special' place in his Irish imagination. The sense of 'special' seems also evident in Nell from A3 School, who expressed a similar feeling to Sandra above about attending matches:

Yeah you do take pride in the country. Well I was in Croke Park a good few times this year and the atmosphere is brilliant and it's getting behind your team and you know it's Irish. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

It would certainly seem that for Ray, Nell and Sandra Gaelic sports can, in Dunning's words, offer 'experiences which are analogous to the excitement and emotional arousal generated in war and other 'serious' situations like 'being in love' (1999:221). Perhaps something 'special' can also be seen in Dermot's response from B2 School when asked if he would play Gaelic sports:

don't know really like [think I might play Gaelic games] I think its [GAA] important and stuff, but I just don't think I'd play it like. I love soccer but I just don't really like playing GAA, if it was a choice. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

The thinking it is 'important' without actually liking, playing or even spectating the game points both to the historical connection with 'cultural romantic nationalism' - the GAA is 'important' of and by itself in marking Irishness - but also suggests that indeed the GAA may well be something 'special'.

One of the reasons that the GAA could possibly be 'special' is that, for Bairner, it 'continues to be inextricably bound up with ethnic nationalism' (1999:22). It is highly debateable how entwined the Irish Rugby Football Union, the Football Association of Ireland or the Cricket Union of Ireland are in promoting a specific and fixed 'ethnic nationalism':

There is a mythological dimension to the GAA which is rooted in a vision of Celtic Ireland and is similar in certain respects to the *Volksgemeinschaft* which formed the cultural backcloth to the rise of the Third Reich in Germany in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In this vision, high emphasis is placed upon the purity of the Gaelic race. Gaels are portrayed as being intellectually and physically superior to their English counterparts, who are perceived as the produce of centuries of inter-racial mixing involving the Ancient Britons, the Romans, and several other European tribes (Sugden and Bairner, 1993:29).

The changes relating to the GAA over the past 10 years have been dramatic and have unquestionably altered the functioning of the GAA, but the 'mythological dimension' is still readily visible from television commercials which can portray Gaelic players as warriors in ancient Gaelic dress or even less evident in Dermot's celebration of 'Celtic crosses' or the Celtic designs that adorn Gaelic jersey. This establishment of Gaelic lineage obviously affects who may symbolically belong, and who may not belong, within the broad stroke of *The Nation*, or the Irish Nation constructed by the GAA. Even when the GAA contemporises its advertising

settings and presents Gaelic games as a mark of communal integration and belonging – ‘Be Kit be Kin’ advertisement for instance - it is noticeable that the setting seems decidedly rural and the GAA participants are exclusively white. Though one would expect the GAA - an organisation that is as adept as any other sporting organisation at fine tuning its publicity - to change the emphasis of its advertising message to emphasise inclusive urban representations, the ability of the games to potentially mark a badge of Irishness could also allow for Irish identity - if understood as *white* - to be fundamentally redrawn. The effects that being a successful Gaelic sports figure can have upon the individual and collective encounters can be telling. Sean Óg Ó’hAilpin, for instance, tells of how Gaelic sports helped lessen his identification as an Other:

Living up in Fairhill at the start you’d get a few comments. Ye’re only black cunts or whatever. We just went on. Because to be honest there was another twenty hanging behind if we didn’t. Then, since we started hurling with Na Píarsaigh, it just dwindled away (Ó’hAilpin quoted in Humphries, 2004:442).

Of course it should be accepted that it is not only the sport but also the success of the sportsperson that can determine how they are viewed. What may be considered the reorientation of the GAA over recent years can be seen as allowing Gaelic sports and the GAA a continuing influence within constructions of Irishness even though young people might not necessarily take any personal interest in Gaelic sports.

## 7.2 Soccer

It would be highly unlikely that any of the young males - or the young females - who participated in this research would not have played soccer at some time in their lives, even if most likely at the informal street ‘kick about’ level. Soccer is the most popular sport in Dublin - at both the formalised participative spectator level and at the informal ‘kick-about’ level for young - particularly male - people. Though many of the young people researched may not have played Gaelic games, or they may not have spun or kicked a rugby ball or played basketball or hockey, most would, at least, be expected to have kicked around a soccer ball.

Though the Irish domestic professional soccer League may only draw a few thousand supporters to their matches each week the number of replica soccer jerseys - particularly English clubs and Celtic - visible throughout Dublin is a very clear testimony of the support present in

Dublin for a wide variety of soccer teams, as indeed are the comments from some young people directed towards Steven Gerrard, the Liverpool team captain, as a role model:

Don't have a role model in particular who's every move I follow but I admire people e.g. Mohammed Ali and Steven Gerrard (QQ158).

Steven Gerrard - Liverpool - because he plays for my favourite team (QQ168).

Steven Gerrard who plays for Liverpool. I just like him and look up to him (QQ268).

Soccer is popularly based, and symbolically we will see something of its ability to both transcend class and gender, and this can feed into how sports may be utilised as a popular nationalising device:

the political and literary versions of nationalism are elitist, the nationalism that is propagated by sport is not. While literature is high culture and the preserve of the few, sport is low culture and the passion of the many (Cronin 1999:19).

Though Cronin's dichotomisation of 'culture' would certainly be tested by any post-modernising influence, we can see something of what Cronin identifies in 'the passion of the many' by how Luke stated, jokingly, that his views towards feeling positive about *being Irish* depend 'on how well the [international] soccer's going'. Luke, of course, has a point. There is little doubt that a lot of people would feel very positive towards *being Irish* if Ireland had an extremely successful international soccer team or if Ireland won the soccer World Cup or European Championship.

Soccer is important for people and Ireland, relative to its size, has produced quite a number of highly successful international sporting athletes, particularly soccer players - George Best, Liam Brady, Paul McGrath and Roy Keane for instance - which can, and has, encouraged a heightened sense of international status:

On the international stage or playing field sport can provide countries with a status out of all proportion to their economic, military or political significance (Horne *et al*, 1999:197).

Though, as is seen in the above analysis, Gaelic sports hold some place in how young people construct their understanding of Irishness, Houlihan points out that the dominance of the GAA 'is being challenged by soccer, and to a lesser extent, rugby' (1997:42). For Houlihan there is a 'deeper cultural change within Ireland that may make Gaelic sports less attractive':



Soccer can be seen as both an element in that process of engagement with the world and symbolic of Ireland's confidence (ibid).

The global popularity and reach of soccer - it is *the* global sport, unlike other sports which may have a large international audience, like cricket, basketball or rugby, but are only played or spectated in selective national or regional pockets - ensures soccer an ability to popularise *the Nation* on a very global scale. Cronin draws a very clear distinction between the meaning of soccer and Gaelic sport in Ireland and in the implied visions of *the Nation* each sport can represent:

While Gaelic games seek to define Irish nationalism in an insular thirty-two county context, soccer defines Irish nationalism in the context of the global (1999:21).

Gaelic sports can only nationalise Irishness to a limited extent through a specific bounded Ireland but soccer nationalises through internationalising beyond this bounded 'insular thirty-two county context' and within a globally comparative setting. Bryan Fanning highlights that in the 'early 1990s a new popular discourse on Irish identity' emerged 'which sought to reconstruct Irishness as diasporic, globalised and inclusionary' (2002:185). For Fanning this 'new popular discourse' was dramatically symbolised by the Irish soccer team:

This new Irishness was strikingly represented by the national soccer team consisting, for the most part, of first- and second-generation descendants of emigrants (ibid).

Though Fanning may essentially dismiss the 'new popular discourse' as comprehensively challenging established views towards what constitutes Irish identity can it be claimed that soccer, for young people in Dublin, does not challenge their view of Irishness? On the importance of soccer Fintan O'Toole has written that:

sport has become a crucial means of self-definition for countries, and soccer, as the greatest international team sport, is the most important of all. In a country like Ireland, which has particular problems in defining itself, the effect is even greater than in countries with some cause for confidence... the mongrel nature of the team which has come from Glasgow, London and Manchester, as well as from Irish towns and cities, is the best representation of what it actually means to be Irish now (O'Toole quoted in Rowan, 1994:187)

Soccer is an important element in both celebrating Irishness and enforcing a particular view of the Irish.

### ***7.2.1 The Symbolic Placement of Soccer***

Though a majority of young people symbolically identified with the GAA – 59.5% (N=195) – the figure for the *Irish soccer team* stands at a far higher 75.2% (N=246). Almost double the numbers of young people sampled - 48% (N=157) against 24.7% (N=81) - valued the *Irish soccer team* as personally *Very Important* compared to the numbers for the GAA. Though the GAA pulls in more *Important* symbolic valuations than the *Irish soccer team* it remains evident that more people self-identify with the *Irish soccer team* as *Very Important* or *Important* than they do with the GAA. Though the *Irish soccer team* is clearly symbolically significant for a majority of the sample - and can certainly be seen as more significant than other *Symbols of Irishness* like *U2*, *Catholic Church*, *the Irish language* or *Irish folk music* - it remains a symbol, which like the GAA, is more emphasised in significance within the understanding of the Generalised Other than against personal identification and it can also be seen that again a strong factor affecting self-identification is class backgrounds:

***Table 7.4 Gender and class breakdown in personal and Generalised Other symbolical attachment to the Irish soccer team<sup>6</sup>***

Irish soccer team	Very Important	Important	Not Important
<i>Working class male</i>			
Personally	54.4% (N=62)	28.9% (N=33)	14.9% (N=17)
Generalised Other	63% (N=70)	28.8% (N=32)	7.2% (N=8)
<i>Working class female</i>			
Personally	51.8% (N=65)	26.8% (N=33)	19.5% (N=24)
Generalised Other	59.8% (N=73)	31.1% (N=38)	7.3% (N=9)

<sup>6</sup> R value of .000 for Personal symbolic attachment to Irish soccer team based upon Class, and R value of .004 for Personal symbolic attachment to Irish soccer team based upon Gender. R value of .026 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to Irish soccer team based upon Class, and R value of .008 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to Irish soccer team based upon Gender.

<i>Middle Class Male</i>			
Personally	37.7% (N=12)	22.6% (N=7)	38.7% (N=12)
Generalised Other	50% (N=16)	31.2% (N=10)	18.8% (N=6)
<i>Middle Class Female</i>			
Personally	30.5% (N=18)	27.1% (N=16)	42.4% (N=25)
Generalised Other	60% (N=36)	28.3% (N=17)	10% (N=6)

A clear class distinction is evident from the above Table with 54.4% (N=62) of working class males and 52.8% (N=65) of working class females personally valuing supporting the *Irish soccer team* as *Very Important* compared to a much reduced 38.7% (N=12) of middle class males and 30.5% (N=18) of middle class female students. What further emphasises the classed difference regarding the *Irish soccer team* are the percentages of students who marked the *Irish soccer team* as explicitly *Not Important*. When well over one-third of both middle class cohorts identified the *Irish soccer team* as *Not Important*; the equivalent figure for the working class cohort stands significantly below this at 14.9% (N=17) for working class males and 19.5% (N=24) for working class females.

Given that support for soccer is generally concentrated within working class areas - just as playing rugby is more concentrated within middle class areas of Dublin - perhaps it is unsurprising that class plays such a factor in identification; working class students irrespective of gender symbolically value supporting the *Irish soccer team* as a significant personal marker of Irish identity in greater proportions than middle class young people. Though there is a pronounced level of class disjuncture based upon personal evaluation towards the *Irish soccer team* when consideration is given to the projected evaluation of the Generalised Other some levels of shared feelings towards how privileged the *Irish soccer team* may be for the Generalised Other are displayed.

Consistently, across cohorts, over three-quarters of students project the Generalised Other as viewing the *Irish soccer team* as either *Very Important* or *Important*. With young working class males it is seen that 85% (N=102) place the Generalised Other as holding *Important* or *Very Important* symbolic understandings of the *Irish soccer team*; for young working class females it is 87.4% (N=111); for middle class male students it is 81.2% (N=26) and for middle

class females students the projected Generalised Other value is 86.8% (N=53). It is evident from this analysis that young people situate both higher personal symbolic association in the *Irish soccer team* than they do in the *GAA* and also for the Generalised Other. Clearly the *Irish soccer team* is perceived as an important source of identification for young people, and as we will also see, this shapes an understanding of Irish identity.

### ***7.2.2 The importance of soccer***

For some young people attendance at sporting matches can ignite feelings very much in line with how Cronin has described sports as ‘a communal experience’ where, ‘The crowd at a sporting event is brought together for a period of time with a single focus in mind’ (1999:19). Perhaps given the placement of a ‘communal experience’ in sport it is unsurprising that Connor, who attends Irish international soccer games, emphasises some sense of shared communion in how he describes his enjoyment at going to soccer games:

Going with mates [to international soccer games], having craic you know? All the people together you’re supporting the one thing. Its good craic, lots of colour and stuff. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

It may be very much ‘having craic’ but it is also ‘people together’ sharing in a passion of support. Sports are very much marked by an ability to unite - through the *we* identification - and how this *we* identification can be fully appreciated is through the feeling young people experience when actually attending matches. For Frank who also attended international soccer matches:

it’s the atmosphere, it’s difficult to explain. But it’s the build-up, the anthem, the colours and like just people like going being really passionate about the team. You have to feel it, follow the team. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Obviously Connor and Frank emphasise an emotionality attached to attending soccer games somewhat similar to Ray’s description above of the *GAA*. It is a feeling that has to be experienced for Frank for people to fully understand its significance and similarly for Connor the ‘atmosphere’ points at ‘a single focus in mind’ with ‘All the people together you’re supporting the one thing’. Though attending matches can heighten feelings of togetherness it should be appreciated that sports ability to mobilise passion also works effectively through the media. Frank may well feel that the ‘build-up’ towards a game, and how the game is itself experienced,

are important, but there is no suggesting that people who may watch a game on television may not also experience a similar sense of 'build-up' and excitement towards the game.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for Paul - given how supporting a team involves some level of commitment in the success or failure of the team - the participation of Ireland in the soccer World Cup or the European Championship somewhat determines both his own level of interest but also determines, what he perceives as, the general social level of interest in each Tournament:

Paul - Such like in the World Cup and Euro 2000, it's not half the same if Ireland aren't playing in it.

Patrick - What are you talking about it's exactly the same.

Paul - You don't have the same interest.

Patrick - The whole competition is the same.

Paul - It's not. The atmosphere is completely different. Everyone has flags out their windows and stuff. The Euro 2000 was classic. See everyone with Cork City flags in behind the goal, and they didn't just go to Ireland games.

Christopher - Parents taking me out of school. Most other people parents bringing them home and watch the match, Germany, Cameroon.

Paul - Brings everyone together supporting Ireland kind of like.

Jo - It brings everyone together, that kind of national feeling?

Edward - Definitely yeah. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Patrick may defend the notion that formally each Tournament is 'exactly the same', which of course they are with or without the involvement of any Irish soccer team, but certainly Paul, Christopher and Edward can appreciate that with Irish participation in a prestigious soccer Tournament, 'The atmosphere is completely different' in Ireland where Irish involvement guarantees a committed level of public attention. Paul is of course correct in the context that if Ireland was in a soccer Tournament, though perhaps it should be emphasised a male soccer Tournament, it could hardly be missed by the numbers of people who do indeed hang 'flags out their windows and stuff', or how media attention would be overly concentrated on the event. Tournament involvement seems like a call to mobilise sentiment towards Irishness. However though these sentiments are a 'communal experience' and unquestionably nationalising, there

was also some understanding that soccer is viewed as more a symbolic expression, and as more passionately followed in working class areas compared to their own middle class areas:

Patrick - It's [where I live] not the same as Crumlin though.

Edward - I remember going through Tallaght during the World Cup like, a lot of houses put up flags, completely different, a lot of houses, things going on in the street, completely different.

Lee - Seems like the working class try much harder than we do. Like on my road up in Foxrock would be like upper class. Like you know for the World Cup we'd have a couple of flags out but like nothing like to the extent like Crumlin or Tallaght. When you're going into town, can't remember what street it was, but they even painted the walls.

Paul - If you're going down East Link Toll Bridge coming out of town, people, going south down the East Link, all the apartment blocks, they'll come out and paint their own so they be all like green, white and orange squares throughout the entire block...

Edward - Yeah deadly.

Paul - ...You never see that like around [where I live]. You'll see the odd flag.

Lee - A flag out the window would be the most [we'd do]. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

The observable class difference in symbolic expression - and it should be appreciated that these students are accurately describing the different levels of symbolic displays that generally pertain between working and middle class areas in Dublin during soccer Tournaments involving Ireland - was explained by Darragh, in A3 School, as possibly relating to working class people perhaps being 'more proud of being Irish' compared to middle class people but Janet highlighted how working class areas are often more decoratively adorned than middle class areas for particular seasonal events, not only soccer events:

Janet - But they [working class] do that at Christmas as well. Big time. You know really love painting houses for the occasions. You know at Christmas they all have the fairy lights out on the house and in Rathgar there'd be one wreath on a door!

Andy – Yeah I'd reckon if Ireland played a football match in the World Cup there be a lot more banners and houses painted in [working class areas compared to middle class areas]

Jo – Was there any flags out for the last soccer World Cup?

Niamh – The last time we were in the World Cup there was flags.

Jo – On the street in your residence?

Niamh – People had them in their cars and stuff.

Andy – Yeah everyone did.

Niamh – Yeah everyone had them on their cars.

Andy – Yeah but I reckon I saw more around Crumlin, probably, anyway.

(Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Middle class young people perceive soccer to have greater salience as a national identity marker for working class young people than for themselves. This perception was borne out in the findings of the questionnaire.

However though there is a felt class difference between how young middle class people feel about the Irish soccer team and how they project working class engagement with the Irish soccer team to be negotiated, the sense of sharing in supporting Ireland is strongly emphasised. Though working class people can be projected as more emotionally engaged this does not prevent middle class people from sharing in this same engagement of support. This can be seen as particularly emphasised within the notion of Irish supporting behaviour, in what is a full articulation of the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* displayed through sport, as highlighted by young middle class female students at A4 School:

Mary - In France [in 2004 for the World Cup qualifying game] they went over [the Irish supporters]. Was more Irish people there cause they all went on the French side.

Nora - And there was like, three people with the [Irish] hats on.

Jane - More Irish people bought the tickets than French did.

Ciara - And it was in France.

Jane - So it shows that we do have fun and all. And I know like there's Irish people that do get drunk when there's the matches but other than that we are fun people.

Jo - Is drink aggressive?

Jean - No but like in England at a soccer match, there was a soccer match and English fans weren't going to be allowed go.

Mary - Cause they upset people and stuff, they're really rough.

Jean - Like thirty years ago the English fans killed three people or something.

Mary - They still do now.

Jean - English people get more people arrested at their soccer matches than Irish people do cause they get aggressive if they lose and they start fights.

Jo- Is there a sporting ethic?

Jane - Celebration, winning or losing.

Mary - Everything for them [the team] coming home like and they didn't even win. And in all the other countries it wasn't like that. It's the taking part.

Esther - Cause then there's less pressure on the team. Like the Irish sports people there's not that much pressure on them but like in tennis, with Tim Henman, if he plays crap he gets so much abuse for like two weeks you feel so sorry for him like he's in the papers everyday. Like there's not that much like Ireland didn't do well in the Olympics but there wasn't all like the runners crap blablabla. There's not as much of that as in other countries. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Cronin's positioning of a favourable comparison with an Other as leading to a celebratory feeling towards ourselves obviously can be seen in Jean and Mary. The international unpopularity of the English against the implied popularity of the Irish proposes a dichotomy in identification; in how the English are constructed as behaving and in how the Irish are regarded as behaving. Though this grouping seems largely less involved in devotedly following the Irish soccer than other groups - for instance I did not get the impression that anyone in the group could name the Irish soccer team when the unmistakable impression from other groups, particularly groups with male members, was that they could easily name the players on the soccer team - and though this may tie in with how only 29.5% (N=18) of middle class female students saw the *Irish soccer team* as symbolically *Very Important*, there is obviously pride taken in the following and in the achievements of the Irish soccer team from this group in A4 School. The group celebrates not simply how supporters behave but also how the Irish media behaves and what this may say about perceived social expectations. The English press and public are seen as being both overly



analytical and overly critical of the performance of their athletics while for 'Irish sports people there's not that much pressure on them'. The Irish have a 'Celebration' irrespective of the result, according to Jane, which connects with a particular amateurish sporting ethic and importantly reinforces the *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*. At a general level for this group supporting the Irish soccer team is a celebratory experience which requires the ability to remain non-aggressive but also a passionate supporter, even when the team has lost. The Irish are successful because they have not got a mentality that prioritises victory over all and anything else, and the Irish partake in the enjoyment or 'the taking part' which, according to Mary, is what is really important. Reid and Jarvie have written that the connection between sports and nationalism helps 'construct an image of the nation' (2000:83). The obvious question is what construction of Irishness is facilitated by soccer?

### ***7.2.3 Irish sporting ethic***

Young people offer the notion that Irish sporting involvement will ensure that essentially nothing violent will ever occur between spectators and that following Ireland is an inclusive celebratory experiences. Frank, who as we saw attends international soccer games, did feel that it was unlikely that an Ireland match would ever provoke violence:

No you wouldn't get anything [violent] at a football game you know, it might you know, get a bit like verbal or something where you'd slag the other team and stuff but I don't think you want to go down and like shoot the players or anything or like fight with anyone. Just kind of slagging and stuff. But that's just like I think, just like part of it the whole supporting thing. I don't think [abuse at international soccer games] it's too serious like. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Frank used the instance of the Republic of Ireland playing Northern Ireland in Belfast in a soccer game as evidence of what aggressive spectating might look like:

Like one of my brother's friends went up to the north it was a World Cup Qualifier and he's always said that was one of the worst and scariest nights of his life... Well its just that they were escorted to and from the grounds by the police but like he's always just said that the look of the supporters was just real violent and stuff as if they'd rip you apart if they got a chance he just says it was real scary you know.

Clearly if any Irish soccer supporters were to engage in behaviour that could suggest to opposing supporters ‘one of the worst and scariest nights of [their] life’ it would completely realign the meaning of support - what would the *welcoming* be, for instance, for opposition supporters attending a game? In fairness to Irish soccer supporters they had a deserved reputation for non-violence unlike sections of English soccer supporters who do actively engage in hooligan behaviour. However it is not only the comparison that can be drawn between Irish and English supporters that may suggest a particularly celebratory understanding of Irish identity but importantly how domestic Irish soccer supporters interact with each other. How young people, particularly males, understand this supporter interaction highlights again how young people can understand Irishness through *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*.

#### ***7.2.4 Celebrating cooperation***

Supporting the Irish soccer team, but specifically supporting rival Irish domestic soccer clubs when they play in European competitions, underpins and reinforces *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness* by emphasising and demonstrating the general sociability of Irishness for young people. There is understood to be a definite cooperative element of support evident from some young people who demonstrate support for the potential success of what would normally be a rival Irish soccer club. We could compare this to how a Manchester United fan might react to Liverpool winning the Champions League in 2005 or how a Liverpool fan might have reacted to Manchester United winning the Champions League in 1999.

Paul, who is a Bray Wanderers supporter and attends their matches, associated something distinctively and characteristically Irish in supporting Shelbourne when they played in the Champions League in 2004:

Paul - Even when Shells got into Champions League, I’m a Bray Wanderers fan but I know that other, all the clubs in the Eircom League, got behind Shells and were going like, ‘Go on do that’.

Jo- Think that was a kind of Irishness thing?

Paul - Yeah definitely. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though this inter-Eircom League cooperation was certainly displayed, Edward’s reading of this soccer game itself somewhat goes against the *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*:

It's weird though I went to Shelbourne and Deportivo and like the amount of abuse the supporters gave to Deportivo, I think one guy got his tooth knocked out.

Every time he got the ball the crowd just booed him for like the entire match.

Though 'the amount of abuse the supporters gave to Deportivo' does fit into how Frank above described Irish international soccer games, it may be that the *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness* is more maintained and expressed towards opponents at Irish international games than with club level international fixtures. Where one is an explicit representation of Ireland the other is a representation of Ireland mediated through the more local point of a club.

Though there may be the socially cooperative support that Paul identifies for Shelbourne, Barry, in A3 School, saw support for Shelbourne, and the Internationally Irish soccer team, as firmly attached to an idea of supporting sporting success:

A lot of people are like that, where they support it [soccer] when it's on every four years, they go and get decked up in their colours and they go off and watch the World Cup. But the thing is is the four years in-between. Then there's the Eircom League and that's attracting almost no one. So [sport] it's not really an expression of Irish identity, it's everyone getting behind us when we're doing well and when they're doing badly everyone basically abandons the sport. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

The support for Ireland, for Barry, is tied to momentary celebration, short lived and limited to the occasion. When considering Gaelic sports above it was considered that something of their limited lack of self-identification was related to the definite lack of success of a Dublin team and Barry's comments certainly pinpoint what others feel is the reality of sports in contemporary Ireland:

The winning mentality fostered by the Celtic Tiger is here to stay, and people want it in their sporting spheres as well (Whelan, 2006:218).

The notion of 'winning' somewhat goes against the sporting ethic established by Jane as 'Celebration, winning or losing' or Mary's 'It's the taking part'. There is this dual approach to soccer - and sports in general - whereby it's both important to be sporting, so understanding an *Irish sporting ethic* but it is also important to be successful. This approach seems very much informed by a gendered attitude to sport, where females emphasised an *Irish sporting ethic*

against male students - and particularly those who seemed to attend soccer games - who underlined some element of success as important when supporting Ireland. The success oriented side of this duality can be represented in some of the reasons why Roy Keane stands out as a popular role model because of his success, leadership and ability:

Roy Keane. Because he is great (QQ90)

Roy Keane (leader) (winner) (QQ166)

Roy Keane cause he is the greatest player in the world and I support Liverpool (QQ184)

My role model is Roy Keane. He's my role model because he's a great athlete who stands up for what he believes in. also, he's the reason for the restructuring of the FAI (QQ179).

Roy Keane - he expresses his feelings on the pitch (QQ190)

Roy Keane - because he sticks up for himself and also he is honest (QQ233).

Roy Keane because he is a winner and a great player (QQ237).

Roy Keane, because he is a great player who has come from Ireland (QQ240).

Roy Keane - a great person to look up to (QQ243)

Roy Keane - for saying what he believes in (QQ264).

Emphasising that males are more committed to some 'winning mentality' it is notable that only two females identified Keane as a role model - QQ233 and QQ243 - out of thirteen students. It can also be seen that one of these female's comments, QQ243, continues to somewhat privilege the notion of an *Irish sporting ethic*.

Whelan considers the tension, and how this tension was played out between McCarthy and Keane and how the media and public negotiated Siapan, as a struggle 'between Old Ireland and New Ireland' (2006:221). The *New Ireland*, represented by Keane is about achievement and success whilst the *Old Ireland* was represented by McCarthy and positioned itself around the idea that making the finals was a good enough achievement and lets now celebrate 'the *craic*' (ibid, italics in original). This view finds representation with young people where it can definitely be appreciated how there is a schism in supporting Ireland through New and Old lenses. Roy Keane's status as a hero is clear from the following comments from young people at B2 School:

Jo – You know Keane came across as the most popular role model for people in the questionnaire.

Luke – Keane's a fucking legend.

Jo – What do you reckon with the Siapan thing? Remember when he returned home in the World Cup?

Ryan – McCarthy's fault, he's a prick.

Luke – Captain's right, he's got the right to say it. You know if things aren't right he [Keane] should say it.

Connor – Yeah but Mc Cathy's the manager he picks the team.

Ryan – He's fucking useless. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

The *Siapan thing* could quite easily still arouse emotional debate - years after its occurrence - and importantly the reaction towards Keane shows again how soccer can unite supporters of rival English soccer teams in their support for Keane as an Irish sporting icon. Both Luke and Ryan are avid Liverpool supporters but they each passionately defended an Irish sporting icon, like (QQ184) above, who was then playing for the rival soccer team Manchester United. This highlights how national identification can override club identification and particularly the intensive rivalry usually evident between Liverpool and Manchester United supporters.

How club loyalties can be overridden to lay some emphasis upon *The Nation* is also quite evident in Shelbourne playing Deportivo la Coruña cited above. It can be seen that club identification can be overridden in the interest of what may be considered national interests, but the theme of selective support for an Irish soccer team was also picked up by Sean in the context of the domestic Irish team competing on an international stage:

Sean - It's like Shells.

Barry - Everyone was basically a Shells supporter for a week.

Sean - If you saw the amount of people who went over to Deportivo chances are couldn't have been [all Shells supporters].

Dennis - Ah there was a thousand it was brilliant. I went over [to Spain] and, eh, I'm not telling the story.

Sean- How often have you seen Tolka full to the brim?

Dennis - Maybe 4 or 5 time.

Sean - When you were at Deportivo what was like that?

Dennis - Ah there was 30000 people there.

Sean- Everyone was a Shells fan for a day.

Dennis - Yeah I'll give you an example. When we played la Coruña in Lansdowne it was full, there was 25000 people there. Played Lille 4 weeks later, there were 7000 people there. It was because they all came to see Deportivo it was nothing to do with Shells.

Jo - Other people have said it is all about Irish communal thing. All league of Ireland clubs getting together and supporting Shells.

Dennis - Well yeah I've friends who did go and I've friends in the school who wouldn't support us, they wouldn't go. If Bohs or something were [playing an important European soccer game] I suppose I'd go but I wouldn't care if they won or lost, it would just be for the spectacle really. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

It can be seen that young people engage in selecting what level of support they attribute to supporting Shelbourne in the international context but withdraw support in the local context - of attending matches week in and week out. Though support is limited it does point out how support can be mobilised for particular high profile events and it does highlight a co-operative feeling of support which is most probably unmatched by competitive soccer teams in, for instance, Scotland; it is highly unlikely that a Celtic supporter would attend a Rangers European game willing them a good result or vice versa. It is not necessarily the case that Irish sports or soccer supporters are not as competitive as supporters in other countries but rather it is that a general goodwill exists where representatives from the national league - Shelbourne - can be made representatives of *the Nation*, in an international setting.

While it was seen above that Gaelic sports are accepted as a marking of Irishness, through essentially through differentiating Irishness and not necessarily on a participative level with popular involvement in either spectating or playing Gaelic sports, soccer is fundamentally different. There is not only active participation at a playing level but specifically at an active spectating level for many young people - particularly young males - who seem far more involved in actively following soccer teams than with any Gaelic teams. There is perhaps some overlap in how the GAA is symbolically valued and how the *Irish language* is valued, uncoupled from any effort to actually practice it, but the opposite seems the case with soccer; soccer is both

emotionally valued and also practiced. It can be seen that soccer is an important sport for many young people and that particularly the widespread personal symbolic acknowledgment of the *Irish soccer team* is accepted by the majority of the sample. When Ireland play an important soccer game in some Tournament the majority, indeed the overwhelming majority, of the country will share a concern with the result, and young people are no different.

Though young females may be most unlikely to actually attend matches when compared to young males, it is seen that some young females strongly emphasise an understanding of soccer supporting behaviour as an expression of the General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness. This endorsement of something uniquely and positively Irish can of course be appreciated in how young males also understood their practical support when Shelbourne were playing Deportivo la Coruña. Though Dennis was the only Shelbourne supporter in the groups it was seen that other rival supporters attended the match and were supportive of Shelbourne's achievements. There is some understanding in the above analysis that when Gaelic sports points inwards *at* Irishness, soccer assuredly point outwards and can certainly be implicated in the opening up of Irishness beyond the bounded 'insular thirty-two county context' mentioned by Cronin. This is captured by O'Brien:

the success of the republic of Ireland football team since the late 1980s has forced a rethink on the defining cultural characteristics of Irishness, given that for decades football was regarded as a foreign sport (2004:57).

The global popularity of soccer feeds directly into a nationalising sentiment that places supporting the Irish soccer team as connected with a shared understanding of national unity. This comparatively positioned advantage of soccer is not about any intrinsic compositional value in the sport - the notional *Beautiful Game* for instance, or in the same way that rugby *builds character* or Gaelic games develop a *nationally conscious character* - but is about soccer's popular ability to mobilise identification. From when Ireland first qualified for the European Championship in 1988 there has been a movement of international soccer support away from its traditionally limiting urban working class support base into a national support base. The common national support base of soccer differs to other sports - for instance rugby at International level, particularly in Dublin - meaning that soccer is not necessarily controlled by any restricting class or regional identificatory characteristic.

Though an unmistakeable segmentation and hierarchialising of sport feeds into how students negotiate sports, soccer is seen as one sport that can be seen as contesting exclusivity, particularly class exclusivity. Frank, from A3 School, draws a clear distinction between the different level of engagement and passion found at soccer games and at rugby games:

Ah different. The football would be like more like passionate or something more like ordinary or something... I go to the football games and my brother goes to the rugby and I just think it's like that you know that it's like two different crowds. Like we both support the same thing and I do follow the rugby wouldn't go like but he'll [brother] come to football games but the football is just way more popular like way more Irish or something, the colours, crowds, craic... it's the atmosphere, it's difficult to explain but it's the build-up, the anthem, the colours and like just people like going, being really passionate about the team. You have to feel it, follow the team. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

For Frank both he and his brother support the same outcome - an Irish victory - even though they may be supporting different sports but the different support bases of soccer and rugby is more than evident for Frank. Although Ireland playing in either sport would encourage a national representation of support - supporters from Limerick, Cork, Galway, Belfast and of course Dublin - with Frank soccer is 'like ordinary or something'. Soccer is trans-classed holding a support base that is more socially diverse than rugby, which remains both nationally, and specifically in Dublin, overly concentrated in middle class areas. The distinction between rugby and soccer was also drawn in A1 School:

Alan - It's [rugby] a different kind of way of supporting [Ireland]. It's [rugby] supposed to be more kind of sophisticated. Wouldn't be expected to have big banners, painting your house and all.

Paul - And I think it's different for internationals than it is for like Leinster. Provincial supporters are usually more colourful supporters. Most people go to the international games and just sit down and watch the match. Like in the provincial games get people with all the jerseys, blue flags whatever supporting Leinster. You don't really get that for the internationals... It's kind of good though [soccer because it is more popularly based]. In the rugby matches it's kind of bad, because like there's not like tickets for sale. And people like companies are given



tickets, so it's important people going to the [rugby] matches. It's like a lot of people don't care they just go, companies. But like in soccer its people who support the game, die-hard fans go. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Supporting Ireland in rugby is viewed as 'different' to the support of soccer's 'die-hard fans'. Soccer is placed as popularising Irishness beyond the limits imposed by the attendance at particular events, and beyond the limits of how other sports can emotionally arouse passions. While sports can be segmented and hierarchical, the national representation of soccer can serve to unite people in collective identity. The obvious segmentation of sports – with some sports more favoured than others – and the ability of some popular sports to be representative of Ireland and Irishness obviously spills over into people's engagement with sports. No other sport in Ireland has managed to place Ireland on an international setting as soccer has and its celebration - when it comes around - is inclusive of non-sporting young people allowing the opportunity to celebrate Irishness through emotionally active spectatorship.

## 7.3 Conclusion

Though sport can be seen as mobilising Irishness it must also be recognised that some sports are more privileged in mobilising and constructing Irishness than others. This can be seen in a comparison of meanings attributed to Gaelic sports and to soccer. When Gaelic sports point inwards *at* Irishness, through seeking 'to define Irish nationalism in an insular thirty-two county context', their reception is in a context where students view Irishness as constructed outwards with comparisons on a global stage or in a global context. This is pertinently observed in the lack of a widespread articulation of a Dublin identity expressed through Gaelic games. The GAA's county structure only builds comparisons between counties in Ireland and for the young people sampled there is little evidence of a shared Dublin identity mobilised through Gaelic sports, though there is an appreciation of an Irish identity mobilised through Gaelic sports. There is, as we shall see when examining understandings of an Irish rural Other, a felt difference between identities in Ireland, in the way urban Ireland can differ to rural Ireland, but Gaelic sports are not emphasised as expressing these differences. The over-riding theme concerning Gaelic sports is that they behave as a marker acting to distinguish or differentiate Irishness from other national groupings - because of the distinct character of the sports themselves - but they do not contain

the same capacity to mobilise Irishness that soccer seems to have. Any notion that Gaelic sports are representative of the national sport is seriously challenged by the lack of popular penetration and connection with young people in Dublin. From the entire questionnaire sample only 5.4% (N=19) mentioned playing or watching Gaelic games as compared to 10.2% (N=36) who explicitly listed playing or watching soccer. Of course a Dublin victory in an All-Ireland could, and most probably would, radically change perceptions of Gaelic sports for young people in Dublin. There remains a personal symbolic association existing between the GAA and Irishness and though the symbolic relationship is not as prevailing as that towards the *Irish soccer team* young people still display sympathies towards Gaelic sports as representing something of Irishness. However given the privileged position that the GAA and Gaelic sports have in defining Irishness - their significant historical advantage when compared against other sports like bowling or badminton - it could only be expected that there would be some association made for certain young people between Gaelic sports and Irishness. What is more significant is the lack of symbolic identification given the privileged position Gaelic sports have enjoyed in Irish society as the *true* and *authentic* marker of Irishness.

Though Gaelic sports do provide a sensing of identity there is a clear distinction emerging between how more popular games, particularly soccer, are valued against less popular sports, for instance hockey, tennis, basketball or indeed Gaelic sports. There is a strong theme of differentiating sport - hardly surprising given how rare it is to find someone who could support all sports with an equal passion - but also a theme of understanding that sports are engaged with on different levels:

Sports have been developed and sustained in modern societies characterised by deeply embedded forms of social stratification; it is hardly surprising, therefore, that sport forms and practices are themselves indices of such differences (Horne et. al. 1999:95).

The 'differences' are evident in the sports considered above and how gender and class can flavour the relationships young people may have towards different sports. The almost complete lack of female sporting role models points towards how deeply implicated sports remain in gendering relationships. Though relations towards sports are unquestionably stratified, through class and gender, it can be appreciated that of all sports it is soccer that lends itself to a more

commonly shared feeling of Irishness than, for instance, Gaelic sports or a sport like cricket that hardly ever appears on the compass of Irish identity.

Soccer's popularity allows some form of shared commonality - whereby people understand that soccer can perform a function of collectively mobilising Ireland in support of an Irish soccer victory for instance - but the emotional meanings of soccer are differently experienced by young people and particularly fractured by gendered understandings. Those who seem more emotionally involved with following soccer - and this was essentially but certainly not exclusively young males - see a need for soccer to be winning and successful. This is aptly demonstrated by the support young people showed towards Shelbourne when playing Deportivo la Coruña; a goodwill towards Shelbourne to be successful against Deportivo La Coruña. Though this may also have encouraged a communal sensing of Irish inclusiveness it can be appreciated that what underlies this feeling of inclusiveness is the will to be regarded and identified as successful. The need for success can also be emphasised in how unsuccessful the Dublin Gaelic football team are with regard to winning an All-Ireland. If Dublin had won an All-Ireland in 2002-3 and 2003-4 could one expect to find the symbolic self-identification towards the GAA unchanged from the above analysis? When young males are seen as more driven by a need for success it can be seen that young females are more inclined to regard the success of Ireland, or Irish representation, as exhibited through *General Celebratory Understandings of Irishness*. The success of Ireland is not necessarily measured by a win but is measured by the celebratory behaviour of Irish fans and what this can symbolise; togetherness, passion and an embraced sporting ethic of enjoyment. Though this finds expression with male students it is an understanding that is far more embedded within female negotiations of soccer. However though sports are competitive and can emphasise winning, they can also certainly operate in an environment of tolerance for the opponents and can act to override any internal social divisions in Ireland to present a national expression of co-operation. Sports popularly mobilise Irishness as perhaps no other activities in Ireland can.

# Chapter 8

## The American Other

Though English/British has historically played the role of an immediate distinguishable Other to Irishness, it is – given the omnipresent cultural, economic and political power of the United States – *America* and *Americans* that can serve, for many young people as the most readily apparent Other to Irishness. As a nationalised grouping it is Americans, for young people, not the once historically established English, that are more immediately recognised through what Collinson would describe as the ‘negative symbols of identity’ (1993:34). According to Collinson, ‘negative symbols of identity’ pertain to the construction of collective identifications based ‘on opposition to the identities of others’ (ibid). Collinson’s consideration of the ‘negative symbols of identity’ is framed in the context of European identity being developed against migrant identities and points at the potential of instituting a framework of ‘what society must be protected from’ with the capability to establish identity markers that define ‘a communal identity’ (ibid). Americans, as will be shown, hold this ability to shape Irishness, however, not necessarily through the notion of Irishness being ‘protected from’ America but through Irishness being partially defined as against America and against Americans. This Othering process towards American and Americans is anything but a straight-forward process and there is a definite tension within this relationship. The impact of constructing America reflects a contemporary relationship young people have towards Irishness that serves to simultaneously position Irishness as embedded within a discourse of both clearly recognised difference and distance from Americans but also - through young peoples’ mediated relationships - supplies a powerful identificatory understanding of cultural empathy towards America. It is almost as if some young people have one foot firmly placed in Ireland but another foot floating over, though not in, America. It will be seen that the effects upon the identity of young people through their negotiations of America and Americans can dramatically affect how, and whom, young people register as belonging to and not belonging to the Nation.

This chapter will highlight how young people comprehend and respond to American influences and consider how this may create, challenge or reinforce views about Irish identity and what this can say about *being Irish* for young people in Dublin. Perhaps the most immediate way in which American influences can be seen as potentially affecting Irish identity is through the immense penetration of American cultural commodities in the media consumption of young people. For Edward Said it is not only migrants who cross national borders but ‘the whole gigantic systems of the mass media that is ubiquitous, slipping by most barriers and settling in nearly everywhere’ (1993:374). Illustrating Said’s point, certainly about the penetration of American television commodities, a simple perusal of Irish television programming on Network 2, TV3 or Channel 6 should sufficiently demonstrate, to varying degrees, the saturation of American television programmes and films broadcast on Irish television channels. Examining the questionnaire data regarding media consumption and role model identification will show that American cultural commodities and personalities are an important presence within young peoples’ frame of reference and point towards an understanding that globally and in Ireland ‘America is everywhere now’ (Baudrillard, 1998:86), as both familiar and unavoidable.

It will be shown below that the dissemination of American produced television programmes and American music artists is widespread among young people in Dublin with American cultural commodities being *the* prevailing choice for young people in Dublin. American culture could be described as omnipresent in the media socialisation of young people in Dublin. This chapter will explore how young peoples’ general cultural consumption both helps construct Irishness but most importantly helps to construct Irishness with a comparison to America - and occasionally perceived American values - which can be placed as an explicit Other of *being Irish*. It will be shown that some young people may have internalised projected American socio-cultural values, a particular mode of individualism for instance, but that the construction of Americans - due to their on-going presence experienced most forcefully through television but also through some social contacts - also involves a positing of America/Americans as the opposite to *being Irish*; Irishness can be positioned in opposition to how America is often constructed by some young people. America and American can be placed as essentially involving a controlling and domineering Imperial identity and an identity that can work in opposition to *being Irish*.

We will start the consideration of the American Other by briefly considering what is a debated theme in globalisation - the Americanisation of identity - and follow this by grounding why some young people may consider America as an ongoing presence in identity by looking at the media consumption of young people, which is dominated by American television programmes and musical artists, and reflect on what this may say about identity.

## 8.1 Americanisation

The important placement of Americans as an Other for young people is hardly surprising given the background socio-cultural relationships established by the dominant position that United States cultural commodities enjoy globally that seems to place America in the consciousness of *all* young people involved in this study:

Rarely before in human history has there been so massively an intervention of force and ideas from one culture to another as there is today from America to the rest of the world (Said, 1993:387).

The American influence upon the shaping of cultural identities is often framed in the mode of an *Americanisation of cultures*. It certainly appears that Tom and Ray, from A1 School, view this ‘intervention of force and ideas from one culture to another’ as a theme around a contemporary Americanisation of nationally distinct cultures and identities:

Ray - It’s the same [culturally] everywhere though. My parents are just back from Morocco and only old people now you know - the big dresses they wear, and the hats, pointed shoes - only old people are wearing them. All kids are drinking Coke, wearing Levi jeans. The point is the whole world is alike.

Tom - Americanised.

Ray - TV has taken over, and everyone will be drinking Coke soon. I mean all these small countries that have their traditions, they’ll all be taken away.

Simon - It’s all been, just one world culture. It’s like Japan like when Western people came in and it’s all like Westernised now basically. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

The group express emotional themes towards the undermining of what Ray may view as traditional cultures and their integration into a larger cultural commercial identity.

Americanisation *is* the homogenisation of cultural patterns globally according to the dominant view in this group. The concern with homogenisation is essentially a concern of losing cultural distinctions through identity markers that distinguish *being Irish* from *being American* or indeed from *being Moroccan*. The examples of *Coke* and *Levi jeans*, used by Ray, points to the branded products of Americanisation, as does the ubiquitous assertion that ‘everyone will be drinking Coke soon’ along with Simon’s view that cultural processes are moving towards ‘one world culture’ and where Tom seems in little doubt that this is an ‘Americanised’ global culture.

Toynbee is quite specific in how such a discursive coupling between globalisation and America, that certainly pervades the above comments, can affect perceptions of America:

It makes America hated, for try as you might to describe it any other way, globalisation is by and large the spread of American culture, ideas, products, entertainments and politics. If you view America primarily as a place of vulgarity and avarice, coarsened sensibility and rampant global ambition, you will shudder for the fate of the world. Much of the debate about cultural globalisation is a surrogate debate about America and the value or damage done by its growing influence (2000:193).

This concern with Americanisation that the group exhibit is not a recent development nor is it of course a debate restricted to Ireland. Terry Eagleton, for instance, highlights a concern in the 1960s and 1970s regarding ‘anxieties in Europe about cultural Americanisation’ (2003:25). Regarding Ireland specifically Ardagh highlights a social discourse dating back potentially to the 1950s about concerns that ‘Ireland’s own traditions and identity might be swamped by the inrush of Anglo-American popular culture’ (1994:276). Indeed Lee, writing in the 1980s about RTE is quite explicit about the influences RTE effected in Irish society by opening Ireland not to necessarily ‘universal influences’ but rather distinctively Anglo-American influences (1985:86). Though this concern with ‘cultural Americanisation’ seemingly remains the dominant discourse about ‘Anglo-American popular culture’ there has been, particularly in recent years, a process of increased saturation of American media commodities in Irish society but coupled with the radical politicisation of American culture over the past 15 years and the reach of this politicisation. When Giddens claims that ‘Globalizing processes have transferred powers away from nations and into depoliticized global space’ (1998:141) he is obviously reading issues of identity and culture in a very limited ‘depoliticized’ manner that would seem unsustainable with the politics

of identity implied in the above exchange with Ray, Tom and Simon. The politicisation of Americanised culture over the past 15 years is coupled with intensified global cultural penetration of the American media, ensuring that a concern with Americanisation is typically a concern with social power and particularly how this power is exercised.

Bruce Arnold has written of American cultururation:

American culture is a branch of American imperialism. Like the dollar, its power is spread worldwide. It pumps itself relentlessly into the cultures of other countries, through music, film and television; and the freedom of modern communication systems aids the process. There is a motive of possession. There is a motive of control. There is a zeal on behalf of the American way of life. It needs to be spread and understood, embraced and admired. That is what empires are about (2003:46).

Arnold's process of 'American culture' can be seen to operate from Ray's parents' experience in Morocco, in that 'old people' retain the distinctive cultural markers underpinning Ray's conceptualisation of traditional Moroccan national identity, while the 'kids' embrace symbols of American culture. Though John Gray is correct in writing that 'America is too vast, and ultimately too unknowable' (2003:89) to have a singular global view of its own identity, this does not inhibit an understanding of America and Americans. While John Tomlinson accepts that the United States cannot be homogeneously defined within a singular identity, he also points out that:

This does not prevent us from identifying 'the American way' as a hegemonic culture (or at least one aspiring to hegemony) within the contested terrain of United States culture... It is reasonable to think of this 'hegemonic' culture, this dominant 'vision' of America, as that exported by corporate capitalism, such that this will appear to other nationalities as American culture pure and simple (1991:75).

Over the past 15 years a clear pattern of United States global military, political and cultural hegemony has emerged that neatly segments the globe into either accepting the United States position of power or resisting or rejecting the United States position of global power; this can make an unmistakable impression upon identity in suggesting *what is American* and *what is Ireland*. To get some impression of how culturally America - how it is represented - and



Americanisation can be embedded within young people's negotiation of self and collective identity I shall in the following two sections consider two important areas of socialisation for young people - television and music. These are important areas of identity construction for young people offering not simply values or attitudes but in some cases role models and indeed for some young people a desired future career path. Considering what young people watch and what they may listen to says something of *who they are* and for some young people it says explicitly *who I am*.

## ***8.1.1 American influences; watching television and listening to music***

### ***8.1.2 What Young People Watch***

The power of television can certainly be read in Ray's view that 'TV has taken over' and as a leisure activity watching television was listed by 38.8% (N=137) of questionnaire respondents. A breakdown in the country of origin of television programmes shows the substantial penetration of American produced television programmes in young peoples' selected viewing behaviour from their three listed favourite television programmes:

***Table 8.1 Country of origin programme preferences for young people***

Programmes country of origin	1 <sup>st</sup> Preference	2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference	3 <sup>rd</sup> Preference
American	63.2% (N=206)	57.2% (N=187)	57.5% (N=181)
British	30.4% (N=94)	31.8% (N=103)	28.6% (N=90)
Irish	1.5% (N=5)	3.4% (N=11)	5.4% (N=17)

When British-made programmes can be seen as holding a prominent position within the viewing habits of young people it can be judged that American-made television programmes hold a *commanding* position within the viewing habits of young people when compared to either Irish produced or indeed British produced programmes. Quite clearly young people demonstrate an overwhelming preference for American-made programmes - with all three preferences showing a majority of American-made programmes - as against Irish or indeed British-made programmes.

This penetration of American programmes can certainly be considered to have intensified over the past twenty years. Ardagh, describing mid-1990s Ireland, writes of television viewing that:

In the ratings for the two RTE networks, the most popular programmes are Irish-made, usually led by *Glenroe*, with *The Late Late Show* coming second or third; the only imported programme that gets regularly into the top ten is *Coronation Street* (1994:272).

The contemporary viewing of young people could not be more different; *Glenroe* is no longer made but *Fair City* has derisory viewing figures among the young people sampled. *The Late Late Show* was not listed by a single person in the sample and *Coronation Street*, though still a presence in young peoples' viewing practice - listed by 16.5% (N=53) of students within their three favoured preferences - is certainly not approaching a top three position. There is a pattern of media dominance, with American programmes enjoying a commanding viewership, and two particular American programmes enjoying a very popular audience.

*The Simpsons* is the most popular programme listed by young people. From the sample it can be seen that 41% (N=132) of young people listed *The Simpsons* in their three preferences. The second most popular listing was *Friends* which was highlighted by 39.1% (N=126) of students. After these two programmes no other programme - from any specific country - could obtain a viewership of over a hundred people. A gendering relationship towards programme selection is evident in programmes watched. For instance *Sex in the City* - targeted at females - has a viewership of twenty-one people with all but two being female, while *Jackass* - more themed at males - has eighteen viewers and all but two are males. Similarly in the two most popular programmes a clear gender bias exists with 65.1% (N=86) of those watching *The Simpsons* being male and 70.6% (N=89) of those viewing *Friends* being female.

Along with this gendered relationship the results also suggest that a lucid class relationship also exists. Young middle class students are far more inclined to mark an American programme within their three preferences; almost two-thirds - 69.8% (N=60) - of young middle class people list as first preference an American-made programme, as compared to a reduced figure of 60.8% (N=146) of young working class people. Class can be seen to affect programme selection. Of the eighteen people who listed *Jackass* within their three preferences all but one were working class students. Similarly *Family Guy* is watched by 14.1% (N=12) of all middle

class students while only 4.6% (N=11) of working class students listed this choice within their top three preferences. Some general impression of the impact of class and gender can be seen from Table 8.2 below which examines the country of origin of selected television programmes through young people's three listed programme preferences:

**Table 8.2 Country of origin of programmes preferences based upon Gender and Class**

Gender and Class	American Programme cited	British Programme cited	Irish Programme cited
<b><i>Working Class Male</i></b>			
First television programme listed	72.9% (N=86)	17.8% (N=21)	3.4% (N=4)
Second television programme listed	61% (N=72)	28.8% (N=34)	0
Third television programme listed	57.6% (N=64)	28.8% (N=32)	6.3% (N=7)
<b><i>Working Class Female</i></b>			
First television programme listed	49.2% (N=60)	45% (N=55)	0.08% (N=1)
Second television programme listed	51.2% (N=62)	36.4% (N=44)	5.8% (N=7)
Third television programme listed	52.5% (N=63)	37.5% (N=45)	5% (N=6)
<b><i>Middle Class Male</i></b>			
First television programme listed	53.8% (N=15)	28.6% (N=8)	0
Second television programme listed	59.2% (N=16)	22.2% (N=6)	0
Third television programme listed	53.8% (N=14)	15.4% (N=4)	3.8% (N=1)
<b><i>Middle Class Female</i></b>			
First television programme listed	77.6% (N=45)	17.2% (N=10)	0
Second television programme listed	64.4% (N=37)	27.6% (N=16)	6.9% (N=4)
Third television programme listed	70% (N=40)	15.5% (N=9)	5.2% (N=3)

The results show a commanding majority of young middle class females favour watching American television programmes as a first, second and third preference. After this cohort it is young working class males who exhibited the next strongest preference for American programmes. The only grouping that does not offer a majority of American programmes in their listed preferences is young working class females. Part of the explanation for this relates directly

to the gendered and classed nature of television viewing. It can be seen that of the 75 people who listed *Eastenders* within their three preferences, 76% (N=57) are from the working class female cohort. Similarly of the 53 people who list *Coronation Street* within their three preferences, 71.7% (N=38) are from the working class female cohort. Notwithstanding young females' preference for British soaps, the evidence quite clearly points to young people in general having an undeniable attachment towards American produced programmes.

Perhaps what is also significant is not simply the dominance of American cultural commodities but also how they are delivered. It can be seen that Irish television stations - directed of course at delivering some sense of the Nation, through news delivery for instance - fail to position themselves as the dominant choice of television channels watched:

**Table 8.3 TV channel viewing preferences**

Television Channels	Listed within young peoples top three TV station preferences
Satellite Channels (sports, movies etc.)	66% (N=214)
RTE (1 and 2) and TV3	62.3% (N=202)
Sky One	59.6% (N=193)
MTV	53.7% (N=174)
BBC (1 and 2)	27.2% (N=88)
British commercial channels (UTV and Channel 4)	25.9% (N=84)

The only station from the above which could be considered as broadcasting a regular staple of Irish programmes is RTE 1, and when the figures are analysed for it's viewing it is seen that only fifty-four people listed it within their three television station preferences. Farrel Corcoran highlights the centrality that RTE has traditionally enjoyed in providing 'the dominant picture of the world' (2004:16) but as both RTE and Irish television stations are listed as viewed by just over half of the sample - and of course what young people may be watching on Irish broadcast stations is American and British programmes - it is obvious that young people also draw from widely different sources of information or programming than anything exclusively themed at an Irish audience.

### 8.1.3 What Young People listen to

Music can be cited as pivotal in the self-development of an individual's identity. The power of musical genres to impress upon the immediate consciousness and identity of young people can often be witnessed in dress, lifestyle, attitudes and behaviour - Goths, punks, grunge, hip-hop etc. Though only 22.1% (N=74) of questionnaire respondents listed either playing or listening to music within their three leisure activities one suspects that music plays a far more important part in young peoples identity than implied by the less than one-quarter of respondents who directly linked something musical to their leisure activities. For instance it is seen in the listing of favoured television stations above in Table 9.3 that MTV is listed by almost a majority – 53.7% (N=174) - of young people as one of the television stations they would favour.

The question that asked young people to list their three favoured music acts produced, unsurprisingly, a multitude of Artists from Miles Davis to the Murderdolls. Therefore to simplify findings I have collapsed musical artists into eight separate *Musical Genre*, which dominate young peoples' musical preferences:

**Table 8.4 Music genre preference of young people**

Music Genre	1 <sup>st</sup> Preference	2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference	3 <sup>rd</sup> Preference
Rock	34% (N=111)	35.5% (N=113)	36.3% (N=109)
Hip-hop	19.9% (N=65)	19.8% (N=63)	16.3% (N=49)
Pop Music	17.5% (N=57)	16.7% (N=53)	18.7% (N=56)
Hard-rock	17.2% (N=6)	15.7% (N=50)	14.3% (N=43)
R & B	4% (N=13)	4.4% (N=14)	5.3% (N=16)
Dance Music	3.7% (N=12)	3.4% (N=11)	4% (N=12)
Other (jazz, classical etc)	2.1% (N=7)	2.8% (N=9)	3% (N=9)
Irish Folk Music	1.5% (N=5)	1.6% (N=5)	2% (N=6)

The music genre of *Rock* - including such bands as U2, Oasis, Rolling Stones, REM, Aslan, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, etc. - is overall the most popular genre marked within the three preferences, while *Hip-hop* - where all artists were exclusively American such as Eminem, Tupac, Notorious BIG, DMX, Snoop Dogg, etc. - is the second most popular genre. The third most ranked

preference was *Pop Music* - particularly notable in this category is the dominance of boy-bands, in particular Westlife. The fourth most popular genre was *Hard-rock* and, like *Hip Hop*, is a genre dominated by American artists like Metallica, NOFX, Korn, Marilyn Manson and Nirvana.

Relating young peoples musical preference to artists country of origin highlights the commanding position that American musical artists enjoy when compared to either Irish or British artists and once again shows that a slight class and gender bias interact to show different levels of preference towards American artists:

**Table 8.5 Country of origin of musical preference based on Gender and Class**

Gender and Class	American Artist(s) cited	British Artist(s) cited	Irish Artist(s) cited
<b><i>Working Class Male</i></b>			
First Artist(s) listed	67.5% (N=79)	13.7% (N=16)	11.1% (N=13)
Second Artist(s) listed	66.6% (N=74)	10.8% (N=12)	14.4% (N=16)
Third Artist(s) listed	56.7% (N=63)	18% (N=20)	13.6% (N=14)
<b><i>Working Class Female</i></b>			
First Artist(s) listed	49.6% (N=61)	22.8% (N=28)	24.4% (N=30)
Second Artist(s) listed	54.9% (N=67)	29.5% (N=36)	12.6% (N=15)
Third Artist(s) listed	59.7% (N=71)	28.6% (N=34)	7.6% (N=9)
<b><i>Middle Class Male</i></b>			
First Artist(s) listed	60.7% (N=17)	25% (N=7)	10.7% (N=3)
Second Artist(s) listed	64.3% (N=18)	21.4% (N=6)	7.1% (N=2)
Third Artist(s) listed	51.2% (N=14)	29.6% (N=8)	3.7% (N=1)
<b><i>Middle Class Female</i></b>			
First Artist(s) listed	62% (N=36)	27.6% (N=16)	3.4% (N=2)
Second Artist(s) listed	58.2% (N=32)	25.4% (N=14)	10.9% (N=6)
Third Artist(s) listed	63.3% (N=31)	22.4% (N=11)	8.2% (N=4)

Once again it can be seen how receptive cohorts are to listing an American artist within their three preferences. Though Irish Artists – U2, Aslan, The Dubliners and The Wolfe Tones for

instance – get some mention and is a notable improvement on the derisory figures regarding television programmes – American Artists enjoy hegemony in musical preferences listed.

Though the above Table clearly shows a preference for American artists when compared to that for Irish or British performers it is through a breakdown of the actual *Musical Genres* that more of an impression of what styles of music young people are actually listening to is given. The following table is based upon the top five musical genres and clearly shows how class and gender interact in establishing musical choice:

***Table 8.6 Musical Genres broken down by class and gender***

Music Genre	1 <sup>st</sup> Preference	2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference	3 <sup>rd</sup> Preference
<i>Rock</i>			
Working class male	30.5% (N=36)	32.7% (N=37)	36.5% (N=38)
Working class female	26.8% (N=33)	27.8% (N=34)	28% (N=33)
Middle Class male	60.7% (N=17)	53.6% (N=15)	55.5% (N=15)
Middle class female	43.8% (N=25)	49.1% (N=27)	45.1% (N=23)
<i>Hip-Hop</i>			
Working class male	30.5% (N=36)	30% (N=34)	25% (N=26)
Working class female	19.5% (N=24)	18.9% (N=23)	17.8% (N=21)
Middle Class male	3.6% (N=1)	7.1% (N=2)	0
Middle class female	7% (N=4)	7.3% (N=4)	3.9% (N=2)
<i>Pop Music</i>			
Working class male	.8% (N=1)	.9% (N=1)	1.7% (N=2)
Working class female	35% (N=43)	36% (N=44)	33.9% (N=40)
Middle Class male	0	0	7.4% (N=2)
Middle class female	22.8% (N=13)	14.5% (N=8)	23.5% (N=12)

*Hard-rock*

Working class male	25.4% (N=30)	24.7% (N=28)	24% (N=25)
Working class female	4% (N=5)	4.1% (N=5)	2.5% (N=3)
Middle Class male	32.1% (N=9)	25% (N=7)	29.6% (N=8)
Middle class female	19.3% (N=11)	18.2% (N=10)	13.7% (N=7)

*R & B*

Working class male	0.8% (N=1)	0	0
Working class female	8.9% (N=11)	8.1% (N=10)	11.9% (N=14)
Middle Class male	0	3.6% (N=1)	0
Middle class female	1.7% (N=1)	5.4% (N=3)	3.9% (N=2)

*Rock* is clearly more popular with middle class people generally than with working class people and how gender and class can be seen as operating is shown particularly with how *Hip-hop* is emphasised by working class - particularly male - students and *Pop* and *RnB* are particularly emphasised by working class female students. This class difference in music genres is not necessarily unusual. If one considers those young people who marked *Dance* acts - Prodigy, Scooter, DJ Sammy etc. - as a preference it can be seen that of these 35 people all but 2 are working class people. For middle class young people it is principally *Rock* and *Hard-rock* genres that are noted with *Pop Music* also showing a marked gender factor.

It is hardly surprising how any choice of musical performer can be impacted by class or gender given how record companies invest a huge amount of resources targeting specific audiences. That females dominate the audience of *RnB* and *Pop Music* is predictable given that is the target market and similarly regarding *Hard-Rock* this genre has a well established receptivity on the part of rebellious young males. So far we have looked at the general quantitative pattern of principally American produced cultural consumption in matters typically deemed important - television and music - for young peoples' personal and collective self-development. Though it is clear that in the area of musical and television preference young people consume, in the main, cultural commodities from the United States well above their consumption of Irish, or indeed



British cultural commodities, the important matter is what can be inferred upon identity from this cultural consumption.

## 8.2 Media effect upon identity

Clearly little has been said about how the consumption of American media can be affecting identity in offering a particular reading of the world, perhaps framed through an American lens. Though American cultural commodities enjoy widespread distribution on Irish television stations - and indeed on satellite stations - this, of itself, may of course say very little about identity. The ability of the media to affect identity and behaviour has often been seen as a contested area. For instance the debate about pornography is often argued from two opposed viewpoints where some will argue pornography directly affects sexual behaviour and attitudes when others will argue it does not. Though the power of the media to affect identity may be seen as contested, some people would judge the effects of the media can have upon identity as determining. The American mass mediation process, for Edward Said (1993), is certainly seen to have a radical effect upon identity whereby globally people are drawn into a singular and unifying situation. Said points to how he feels the reception of particular culture texts have been radically realigned. Using the example of the study of 'Commonwealth literature or world literature', Said notes how:

we know that the works and their authors and readers are specific to, and articulated in, local circumstances, and these circumstances are usefully kept separate when we analyse the contrasting conditions of reception in London or New York on the one hand, the peripheries on the other. Compared with the way the four major Western news agencies operate, the mode by which international English-language television journalists select, gather, and rebroadcast pictorial images from all over the world, or the way Hollywood programmes like *Bonanza* and *I Love Lucy* work their way through even the Lebanese civil war, our critical [academic] efforts are small and primitive, for the media are not only a fully integrated practiced network, but a very efficient *mode of articulation* knitting the world together (ibid).

This 'world system', for Said, is implicated in 'articulating and producing culture, economics, and political power along with their military and demographic coefficients, has an institutionalised tendency to produce out-of-scale transactional images that are reorienting international social discourse' (1993:375). Also highlighting the effects of the media upon identity is Herman and Chomsky who open their celebrated book *Manufacturing Consent* on an extremely critical note regarding the American mass media's ability to have a dramatic effect upon identity:

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda (1994:1).

The impression or effects of commercial mass media upon social values and actions is also considered defining by bell hooks. hooks, who regards the dominant media as a form of structural discrimination in the United States, writes:

There is a direct and abiding connection between the maintenance of white supremacist patriarchy in this society and the institutionalization via mass media of specific images, representation of race, of blackness that support and maintain the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of all black people... From slavery on, white supremacists have recognized that control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination (1992:2).

If the 'mass media' so controls and structures social relations - 'maintenance of white supremacist patriarchy' and 'overall domination' - one would expect the impact upon identity to be rather telling. Certainly, regarding Ireland, many commentators have often ascribed the role of television as central in the social modernisation of Ireland:

Television served to challenge and question the norms of authority, moral or political, in the Republic, in a way that had never been envisaged... [the church in the 1960s had] great difficulty in controlling what was broadcast and what was watched on television (Cronin, 2001:225).

It is not simply the access to British stations in Ireland that by-passed established social control but also the development of indigenous Irish broadcasting in the form of RTE that promoted modernisation. Ardagh attributes RTE a modernising role as a ‘catalyst of social change and pioneer of free, open debate, in a [traditional] society previously gripped by taboos of silence’ (1994:268). For Ardagh RTE ‘hastened the process’ of social modernisation (ibid). The effect and role of *The Late Late Show* can be cited, and often is, as a progressive modernising force in Irish society that opened alternative space for social dialogue. However it is not that television once had an historical effect and now does not, rather television still, for some, fundamentally shapes identity.

Corcoran places television as fundamental ‘in dominating the symbolic environment of modern life from early childhood’, where television’s socialising capability is emphasised as felt in early childhood almost as strongly as family influence (2004:17). Postman also attributes television an enormous role in instilling and shaping identities:

Television has achieved the status of “meta-medium” - an instrument that directs not only our knowledge of the world, but our knowledge of *ways of knowing* as well (1985:78-79, italics in original).

Due to its ability to cover, for Postman, ‘all forms of discourse’ television holds a central place in peoples’ lives (1985:92). Postman rightly highlights how television has penetrated our social activities as an almost taken-for-granted, natural social presence, which has a powerful impact upon identity:

Television is our [America] culture’s principal mode of knowing about itself. Therefore - and this is the critical point - how television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be staged. It is not merely that on the television screen entertainment is the metaphor for all discourse... Americans no longer talk to each other, they entertain each other (ibid).

Though some people may dispute the effects that television may have upon identity to the degree offered by Postman it should still be accepted that television - or the ‘mass media’ but particularly television - can play some role in the process of socialisation and can provide the dominant context in which identities are shaped. It could also be acknowledged that the impact of television programmes overwhelmingly situated in America and generally produced for an

American audience would be expected to affect a person's sense of self and a sense of collective-self identity, but obviously one must question exactly what type of effect this is.

### **8.2.1 Media Context**

Richard Kearney in asking 'What does it mean to be Irish?' clearly sees that any answer 'cannot be limited to the frontiers of our island' (1988:21). For Kearney:

The affirmation of a dynamic cultural identity invariably involves an exploratory dialogue with *other* cultures (ibid, italics in original).

There is no question regarding television consumption that most people are involved in some type of 'dialogue' with another culture - generally American but sometimes British - and indeed given not simply the listed preference of young people but the overall penetration of American programmes on most television stations in Ireland and available in Ireland, it is most probably *the* over-riding 'dialogue' many young people are engaged in. However though American cultural commodities may lead the 'dialogue' there certainly is no universal approach towards accepting that Irish identity, as fundamentally dialogically exposed to American cultural commodities, is somehow undermined by the penetration and spread of American media. Though various focus groups may have picked up an element of Americanised media effects upon Irishness, young people typically rejected any linear direct assumption between Americanised media and an Americanised pressure upon Irish identity. Responses to a question about the consumption of American popular culture potentially undermining individual or collective sensings of Irishness, shows that this view is strongly resisted:

Frank - No [I do not feel exclusively watching and listening to non-Irish made cultural will somehow make you less Irish] it's like that thing with playing football. Just cause I support Liverpool that's not like making me less Irish or anything. Maybe we or I would make an effort to like watch Irish TV if it was any good but like *Fair City*!... Like I listen to hip-hop but I wouldn't just listen to American hip-hop I like British but the fact is Ireland just doesn't have any hip-hop there's no way like I could listen to the music I like if the other stuff wasn't available you know? Though I'm not sure I'd want to listen to Irish hip-hop even if it was around!

Brian - Yeah and I mean with the music we listen to like there are some great Irish bands but there just isn't enough choice we're too small. There just isn't enough to choose from in Ireland alone. I think that's mainly why we listen to music from other places but I don't think it affects how Irish we are. I think it's just a taste thing you know what I mean? Just preference or something.

Anne - Yeah but like I kind of do think we're influenced a bit too much by like America and stuff you know. Like every TV show we watch is American and they're all like in high-school and stuff or like even the Australian soaps like *Home and Away* and they're all like hanging out at the beach and wearing the tiny skirts for uniforms and stuff and it's just kind of weird like why we are so interested in watching them?

Polly - I just think they're better than any Irish programmes. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Though Anne does suggest that American influences are notable it can be seen that Frank, Brian and Polly dismiss her suggestion that 'we're influenced a bit too much by like America' and claim that American cultural consumption in Ireland is essentially about the American ability to offer a quality choice of programmes that are 'better than any Irish programmes'. Dermot, from B2 School, like Anne, also felt that there were too many American programmes on television but conceded that media quality was an issue in both social and individual choice:

I don't go out of my way to watch anything just cause it's Irish. I would just watch what's on really. A lot of stuff would be American, I guess you know - *Buffy*, *The Simpsons*, *Boston Public* - but that's just cause it's good, it's better than like *Fair City*! It's what everyone watches, it's what's talked about in class and with your friends. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Meisel, considering the popular cultural influence the United States has in Canada, identifies that:

the American entertainment industry is the most vital and vivacious in the world... conceived as a commercial medium whose major role is to deliver audiences to advertisers. The content has therefore been designed, and with consummate skill, to appeal to the largest possible audience. While this may leave something to be desired aesthetically, or in terms of the educational potential of

the medium, it has unquestionably produced immensely popular shows (1993:306).

These ‘immensely popular shows’ - like *The Simpsons* or *Friends* - are difficult for an indigenous Irish media to commercially or aesthetically challenge. It can be seen that Dermot above identified American television programmes as essentially of a better aesthetic quality and more amenable to school social inclusiveness than Irish programmes. Dermot also showed detachment to the suggestion that he could do something about what he felt was an Americanised media influence within the Irish social field by watching or seeking out more Irish media content:

Wouldn’t be arsed really [looking for Irish programmes]. Then you’d be stuck watching shite like I don’t know that *Evening Prayer* thing!

Though Dermot over-exaggerates the *Evening Prayer* motif as symbolising Irish produced programmes what highlights the penetrative deficiency of Irish programmes is the evident absence of Irish programmes in young people’s listed preferences, and to a lesser extent how Irish media providers fail to hold the dominant delivery of television programmes.

If we are seeking an instance that perhaps suggests something of the direct effects of media upon understanding identity conceivably it can be seen from Ray and Tom at A1 School. When questioned on how people would feel if being Irish was associated with being more like a ‘lager lout’ it elicited the following responses:

Tom - Well in America it is! If you’re Irish are you drunk yet? Even In *The Simpsons*. I was watching the St Patrick’s Day one, and it’s all like beer – and somewhere a little leprechaun “Ahhhhhh” and they were all drunk on St Patrick’s Day remember that one?

Ray – They said they were going to try and find the rarest thing in the world. What? A sober Irishman!

Tom - Even rarer.

Rory - People seemed to like it [the stereotype], people seem to enjoy it.

Tom - It’s humorous. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

The representation of the Irish as associated with excessive alcohol consumption or with leprechauns is largely accepted in the context that ‘It’s humorous’ and ‘people seem to enjoy it’. Notwithstanding the humour within television shows, like *The Simpsons*, *Friends* or *Jackass*, it is

important to highlight how these representations can underpin and frame an attitude towards identity.

### 8.3 Americans/America Framing Irish/Ireland

A notion of Irish identity as authentic can be seen in some responses and it can be placed against the understanding of American identity which is no doubt influenced by media consumption. Sean, for instance, essentially portrayed America and Americans as lacking substantive identity, and as an artificial and degenerate identity when compared against the Irish identity. For Sean being Irish was:

about having less of an ego than the Americans would. Like the Americans they sort of hold themselves very high, but we would be more sort of normal down to earth. That's it! [that's Irish identity]... Well Ireland's all about being traditional where other countries, lets say America, it's so artificial over there. Whereas the Irish have always been the same. So when they [the Irish] see people coming in [immigrants] they do reject them because there hasn't been for the past few hundreds years there's been "The Irish way of life". It's been the only one they had to worry about was people coming in from the north, people that came in through Ireland but now [many different people come to Ireland]. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Irish identity is characterised as more authentic and 'normal' - reinforced by a history that dates back hundreds of years when American identity, no doubt influenced by American media representations, is framed as 'artificial'. It can be seen in Sean's presentation that Irish identity is experienced as more grounded than the projected egotistical Americans, with "The Irish way of life" placed as less 'artificial' than the projected experience of American society. However though America may be characterised as 'artificial' by Sean, American society is positioned as more accommodating to immigration and cultural change than Ireland, with "The Irish way of life" seen as rather resistant to social change having an established pattern 'for the past few hundreds years'. Irish identity is drawn here by Sean as, having taken hundreds of years to develop and being more constitutively substantive than American identity. The placement of America, certainly for Sean but also for many other young people involved in this research, can be seen as *naturally* and *unmistakably* delineating Irish identity. Interestingly Sean's comparison

between the *grounded Irish* against what some seem to consider an *egotistical American* is somewhat represented by an American student at A2 School.

This young person - who identified themselves as American - wrote that while 'Ireland [is] too small, a[nd] has a very conservative mind set', Ireland also suffers from:

close mindedness, [and] the covered up racism and the hate towards other nations who are greater than themselves i.e. America (QQ22).

This American student's observation of Irish 'close mindedness' and social insularity certainly points to Sean's essentialisation of Irishness, where Sean's comments suggest Irish society is resistant to cultural change and perhaps is 'close mindedness'. Though this comment may perceptively highlight the insularised, non-reflexive engagement with Irishness that some people may hold, particularly as an identity that lacks self-criticism, the notion of Irish 'close mindedness' is not necessarily emphasised in the social environment in A2 School where young people's comments certainly point at a very able capacity for self-criticism towards Irish identity and Irish society. However what is perhaps rather significant, in suggesting 'Like the Americans they sort of hold themselves very high' to quote Sean again, is how this young American person draws her own identity against Irish identity. Throughout this research not one person seemed to identify their sense of the Irish nation as in anyway needing to be acknowledged as 'greater' - in any powerful hierarchical superior terms - to any other national identity. Where American identity can be understood as 'greater', Irish national identity seems understood rather through a difference to other national identities not necessarily hierarchically placed as superior - or inferior - to other national identities.

The engagement many young people have towards America is carried out on a critical level and understandings of American can be contested against another. For instance the American student from A2 School chose Martin Luther King as their role model because 'he fought for the rights for his people and won; to me that is a good person to aspire to be like' (*italics added*). Another young person, a female working class student in C7 School, also selected Martin Luther King as her role model but her own comments point at a far more critical understanding of the importance of Martin Luther King than that offered by the young American person:



Martin Luther King [is my role model] because his words touched a nation of inbred hypocrites and his words have lived and will continue broadening our minds (QQ289).

It seems rather obvious that though two young people chose Martin Luther King as a role model they each engage differently in his significance.

Though this young American person at A2 School may feel an under-current of anti-Americanism exists in Irish society it is perhaps a response to a questioning of American power and how it is exercised. Something of this questioning of American power is captured by how some young people emphasise neutrality within their sense of Irish identity. For instance another student also from A2 School, whose father was born in the United States - though they personally made no self-identification with America - added the symbolic association of Irish neutrality as an important marker of Irishness for them (QQ26). As well as adding neutrality the student identified how important she views neutrality as associated with her own sense of Irishness and how the current political climate may endanger her Irish characterisation:

our neutrality has always been what set us apart. We're too small for a war and our government is compromising our rights (QQ26).

How Irish neutrality may form a part of Irish identity can also be picked up in a comment from C4 School which claimed an element of Irishness expressed in 'We are a peace country' (QQ101). While another young person from this School seems to pin-point the change that was needed to maintain this essential 'peace county' image:

I would ban American soldiers from Ireland (QQ89).

Young people in situating Irishness are certainly not as defensive as the American student appears to be in her own understanding of identity. Why the American student may be defensive and why other young people do not seem so defensive about identity is somewhat addressed by Jenny from A4 School. Jenny, who it will be recalled is an Australian, offered Irish neutrality as a distinctive mark of Irishness and also as a reason why the Irish have generally enjoyed a positive international image:

Its cause you're neutral you never have wars or anything. If you have an America passport you can't go to Iraq, if you have an Australian passport you can't go to places around Asia because wars, Vietnam would be kinda looked at. But if you're Irish you can go loads of places.

How Ireland is seen as neutral can be seen by some young people as strongly affecting their engagement towards the United States:

I think that if we stood up to America at the moment and had our say about the war [in Iraq] because if we don't say anything how is America meant to know (QQ211).

Comments such as these emphasise how embedded America - and what America may do - is in the consciousness of many young people; *what America may do affects us all*. It is not simply that America serves in the construction of Irish identity - for instance Ireland is neutral and American is not - but even when looking to respond to criticism of Ireland it is noteworthy that Connor takes the instance of America to highlight possible boundaries of criticising Ireland. Connor's comment, in Chapter 6 on how America has 'stupid gun laws', not only shows how America *can affect us all* but also shows how Connor himself may be involved with questioning relations of power. Again emphasising how embedded America is in the consciousness of young people is how Anthony, following on from Connor's comments, pointed to the blanket stereotype that can operate with both British and American people:

Everyone just like criticises each other. A lot of people just put every single British person into the same basket a lot of people just hate them just on the basis that they are just British and the same with Americans. A lot of people just think that every single American is an absolute thick [sniggers] but everyone does it to each other like, they all just do it to each other, you get a lot of criticism you know you just got to accept it like. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

When a group at B2 School were asked to explain why they thought there were negative comments in focus groups, and some questionnaires, directed at Americans they felt that:

Ciaran – They're [Americans] pricks.

Stuart – I was in America and someone asked us where I was from and I'm like "Ireland", and they thought it was in the South [of America].

Paul – They're thick. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Certainly how the American as Other helps somewhat intellectualise Irish identity is plain with Ciaran's - "They're pricks" - and Paul's - "They're thick" - positioning of Americans as essentially intellectually inferior to their possible projected sense of self-importance and superiority, which may of course come across in media representations and it certainly comes

across in the comment above from the American student. Though Americans can be placed as ‘pricks’ or ‘thick’ by some young people the clearest way in which *Americans* can be drawn as the Other of Irish identity is through Diasporic negotiations.

## 8.4 Irish-American bounding Irishness

When asked about the legitimacy claims of Irish-Americans upon an Irish identity it was consistently seen in focus groups that this was employed as a way of drawing Irish identity as belonging in Ireland:

Ciaran – They’re like my great great great something came from someplace and that makes me Irish!

Paul – They presume they’re Irish and they’re not. They do what they want anyway. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

This presumption of Irishness implies who is to be *accepted* and who is to be *rejected* in the identification of Irish. Americans - unlike other nationalised groupings such as the English or Scotland where young people could be at least somewhat tolerant towards their claims upon Irishness - are almost always immediately distanced from legitimately identifying themselves as Irish. It could be claimed that counter-wise Irish-Americans were illegitimately viewing themselves as part of the Nation while having no supportable legitimate grounds for such beliefs:

Grace - I hate that about Americans, [mocking North American accent] “I’m Irish one cousin third removed”.

Jenny - [Mocking North American accent] “I’m married to an Irish guy that makes me Irish”.

Grace - [Mocking North American accent] “I love your little country Ireland”. Have you ever been? [normal accent]

Jenny – [Mocking North American accent] “No but I’m planning to goooo”. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

It can be seen that the views directed at Americans is something of a parody. Though above both Ciaran and Paul unfairly blanket and essentialise Americas it can be understood this is related to both questioning American political power but also Stuart’s instance where he encountered someone in America who thought Ireland was in America. Some associations with Americans -

they are self-important and uninformed for instance - act to distance claims of Irish-Americans as placed within the Irish Nation. The group at A4 School forwarded suspicion towards Irish-American claims upon Irishness:

Jenny - God yeah [I would not consider Irish-American as Irish].

Grace – They're spas [Americans].

Ruth - Everyone thinks it's cool to be Irish. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Ruth's boundary of *being Irish* as 'cool' can be taken against how internationally *uncool being American* may be. From A3 School expressions of negativity towards Americans were also evident:

Ciaran - [Americans are] Assholes

Kate - That's a bit harsh what's wrong with them?

Ciaran - What's right with them? When they go on about being Irish when they're not! They haven't been here or anything and maybe its some kind of great great grandfather was Irish and "I'm Irish".

Alex - I think that's fair enough that have some links with Ireland, something more than grandfather thing though they can't just claim to be Irish cause like you know someone sailed from Ireland a hundred years ago. My father is from South Africa and I've visited there twice and like I have time for them in sport and things but like I'm not South African just cause my father was born there that's my father.

Bella - Maybe those people who think themselves as Irish just don't like being American. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Bella's view of national identity seems to rule out any duality or multiplicity of national identifications while Alex's view expresses something of the complexity in personalised identities. Some young people - Tom and Jill for instance - with family members with some background in another country or countries can and do identify themselves as comprised of multi-national influences but Alex rejects multi-nationality in his own national self-identification.

Another group within this A3 School also accepted this delineated view of who was included and who was possibly excluded from the Nation:

Jill - I was in America this year and I went on the subway and the guy asked me where I was from, my family. And I said Ireland and he considered himself to be Irish because he's a great great great grandmother who was Irish so he was Irish. He'd never been to Ireland but he still considers himself Irish... No [I would not offer any substance to their view of being Irish] it depends how much contact you have with the country as opposed to, it wouldn't matter if my parents were born in Italy or something, and I came over here [to Ireland] and I lived here for years. It still wouldn't matter you'd be as Irish as the next person. That's the way I'd kind of look at it - it depends whether you want to be [Irish] or not. You know not everybody would want to give up their citizenship for another country and get Irish citizenship. Like my mom doesn't she keeps her English citizenship even though she gets less rights because of that, working restrictions and things like that she keeps her English citizenship cause its important to her. So I don't know I [don't] think it [nation identity] depends on bloodlines.

Barry - The guy in America, because like some ancestor way back in the eighteen-hundreds was Irish he really isn't Irish. He's Irish ancestry but he's lived in America all his life... I don't think it's important to have ancestry I think it's more important that you lived here and you know this is what you consider home. That's what makes you Irish. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

These views point towards a civil understanding of Irishness, where Irishness is seen as dependent upon shared social experience as opposed to any notion that Irishness is genetically determined or pasted on through 'bloodlines'. Americans - particularly Irish-Americans - can act as a frame around Irishness by their active exclusion from Irishness - as unaccepted representations of Irishness - but also in their active clarification within the frame of what it is to be Irish and non-Irish. Ancestry is not determining in *being Irish* for Barry or Jill but rather contact and experience with Ireland is; Ireland is both 'what you consider home' but also a place a person should have some practical experience of living in. Though young people do express particular post-modernising influences it is evident that presentations of *Americans* as *Irish* do act against opening up indefinite meanings of Irishness and so can help frame Irishness for many young people. Jill and Barry each felt that an important element of Irish national identity

association is realised in having lived in a particular nationalised space and not experienced Irishness through other nationalised cultural negotiations.

Out of all focus group participants it was only Jane who really offered any substance to the identity claims of Irish-Americans as being considered within Irish identity:

Jean - I think it's funny [Irish-American claims upon Irishness]. It's cute for them to think "I'm Irish wow" and plus people here are so fun.

Jane - If they have a way of proving their roots to Ireland then they are Irish.

Mary - Why should they have to prove it? If they want to be Irish let them think they're Irish.

Jane - Just a way of proving it.

Nora - Loads of people want to be Irish but they're just saying "I'm Irish".  
(Interview conducted Spring 2005).

For Finnegan:

Ireland is experiencing the birth pangs of transition to a culture that is rapidly losing the experience of shared meanings. In such a culture it becomes increasingly possible to believe in something without formally belonging to it or the tradition that first gave it birth (2005:62).

There is some overlap with Finnegan's 'belonging' and how it is operationalised for some young people at A4 School. Jean, Nora and Mary each distance how *real* or *practiced* Irish-American claims upon Irishness are but they do not necessarily exclude anyone's claims to *being Irish*. Mary goes so far as to challenge any connection to Ireland itself and any heritage when asking, 'Why should they have to prove it?' When Irish-American claims upon Irishness are unsubstantiated, when they do not live in Ireland and have minimal contact with the everyday experiences of the reality of Irish identity a 'If they want to be Irish let them think their Irish' attitude may exist but *we* perhaps know differently. The Irish-Americans thinking themselves Irish and *being Irish* are distinct but the power - social, economic and military - implied in the United States seems to promote an acceptance that, as Paul said, 'They [Americans] do what they want anyway'; that you cannot successfully challenge the power of the United States and the attitudes of Americans. However it is not only this inability to prevent Irish-Americans from thinking that they are Irish that forms an influence upon identity but there is also some tactical decisiveness evident in being tolerant of Irish-American's claims upon an Irish identity.

## 8.5 Commercial pressures upon Irish identity

How some young people negotiate *Americans* not only allows for a picture of Irishness but for some young people it points towards an understanding that Irish national symbolic representation is coupled with an overt tactically calculated commercial concern that is directed at promoting Ireland as Traditional Ireland for the benefit of tourists. Some young people seem utterly alert to the importance of the commercialisation of identity and can understand the commercial processes establishing how Irishness may be symbolised. The commercialisation of identity and specifically identity markers is a theme picked up by Sean, and who with Dennis, highlighted the selectivity involved with what images can - and what images cannot - be employed at a commercial level to represent Ireland:

Sean - The fact as well the way tourist board like will send off ads of just say a little country pub with the lad in the corner with the bodhráns and a lad singing with little wooden seats and all that. Just to show yeah that this is Traditional Ireland. People come over and they see Ballymun flats!

Dennis - Tourist people aren't going to put up Ballymun flats and say "Come to Ireland". (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Ballymun flats were probably never a general reason to visit Ireland but the notions implied in Sean's representation of *Traditional Ireland* or *Ireland* - sociability, welcoming, musical traditions etc. - are persuasive factors in commercially representing Ireland. Titley's (2005) suspicion that the Irish are adopting commercially imposed identifications can be seen in the tension that Sean highlights between the expectations tourists may hold of *Traditional Ireland* when they arrive in Ireland and the reality of what they will encounter, in the Ballymun flats for example. Jill offers a practical example demonstrating a level of ignorance on the part of some people in the United States towards Ireland touching on how some may *imagine* economic development within Ireland as fixed to notions of *Traditional Ireland*:

When I was in America this summer we were talking to this group of teenagers and they were surprised that we actually had McDonalds in Ireland. They were actually surprised we actually had McDonalds in Ireland! They used to know us as the leprechaun - the leprechauns! - because we came from Ireland. It didn't

necessarily bother me but you know? They really could not believe that we had McDonalds in Ireland! (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

If Ireland is to be represented as *Traditional Ireland* it is to be expected that some American people might be surprised to learn that McDonald's operates in *Traditional Ireland*. Jean, from A4 School, also highlighted how Ireland may be perceived in America as *Traditional Ireland* uncorrupted by economic modernisation:

They [Americans] don't think of us as very rich at all because like my aunty is like friend's with this America couple and they come over and own an island off like Cork, off Killarney, and when they go home they can say they own an island in Ireland and everyone must think its cheap [in Ireland]. It must be cheap to buy an island, to buy a whole island. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Jean's comments have an unmistakeable feeling of an unrecognised national economic reputation; Irish people are rich, neither land nor houses are cheap and Ireland is economically developed; why don't Americans know this? Some of the reason, of course, for not understanding Irish modernisation relates to how Irishness can be seen by Americans under the power of *Traditional Ireland* or indeed how commercial representations of Ireland do emphasise themes of rurality.

The potential for commercial factors to affect identity are important. Regarding the commercialisation of identity George Boyce points out that:

The characterising and marketing of a country is part of the modern preoccupation with promoting tourism, and is also a place where politics and commerce meet: a country's image cannot be wholly divorced, even for commercial gain, from its notion of what it stands for, and what its fundamental values are (2001:254).

As we will see when we discuss the placement of Irish Rurality in the consciousness of young people the contemporary construction of *Traditional Ireland* as rural is a commercially employed device that affects the feeling of Irishness; *if you want to experience true authentic Irishness visit Traditional rural Ireland*. This commercialisation of identity was also a theme picked up by Tom who sees a distinction between tourist expectations and social reality but he endorsed this relationship and even supported the notion that the airport runways could be lined with plastic leprechauns - 'make it real Irish' - to make tourists feel both more welcomed and to symbolise



that they had arrived in Ireland. Tom sees a need in Ireland for more public symbolisations of Irish identification:

We need loads more flags you know the way like in America everyone has one. Every house has a flag... The Americans are all in your face about being Americans. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Ray described Tom's symbolisation - and this seems accepted by the group - as 'real Redneck'. Even though facets of American culture play a central role in Tom's idea of how people in Ireland should express their Irishness it can be seen that young people in this group are essentially dismissive of such a politicised identity with 'loads more flags'. Young people are selective in interpreting what is implied or represented by America and the following section will show how young people can also selectively embrace America.

## 8.6 The American Dream

The second factor notable in Bruce Arnold's quote above is the linkage of American culture to American Imperialism. If imperialism can be seen *not* from the perspective of the Imperialist - 'possession... control[ling]... [promoting] the American way of life... [that] needs to be spread and understood, embraced and admired' according to Arnold - but from the perspectives of what might be termed *the native*, what presumptions can be made about the pressure of Americanisation upon young people's identity in Dublin? If it can be accepted that there is a projected 'American way of life' and this mode of life is promoted as a *global norm* then *America* can be understood at a level of aspiration to experience the Imperial centre, to partake in *The American Dream* or *The American way of life*.

The questionnaire asked; *In the future do you think you might live outside Ireland for at least 6 months? If yes, where do you think you might live?* The result show that 82.1% (N=289) of young people would like to live outside Ireland for some period of time. Though a variety of different countries were offered - from Spain to Russia to Australia and Canada - from the results it can be seen that the country with the highest preference was the United States, offered by 43.8% (N=154) of young people sampled. A comparison with the figure for those students who want to live in the UK at 17% (N=60), or those would want to live in Australia at 20.7% (N=73), or Spain at 10.5% (N=37), clearly places a desire to live in the United States as foregrounded in many young peoples' consciousness.

A further breakdown through class and gender of those wanting to live in the United States shows that, proportionally, it is females - from either class - who are most enthusiastic about living in the United States, followed by working class males, and only middle class males fail to show any firm aspiration to live in the United States:

***Table 8.7 Desire to live in America for at least 6 months broken down through gender and class***

Gender and Class	Wanting to live in the United States for at least 6 months
Working class males	42.7% (N=56)
Working class females	46% (N=59)
Middle class males	24.3% (N=11)
Middle class females	46% (N =28)

The impact American media consumption can have could be viewed as a contributing pull factor, in presenting the United States as a desirable place to live as from the above media analysis it was shown that females and working class males were more favourable inclined towards American television and music than young middle class males. When we analyse the television preferences against the desire to live in the United States it can be seen that a correlation exists between watching American programmes and wanting to live in the United States:

**Table 8.8 Correlation matrix for those who want to live outside Ireland and specifically in the United States and their consumption of American television programmes**

		Number of American programmes listed	Wanting to live outside Ireland	Wanting to live in the United States
Number of American Television programmes listed	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	1 . 352	-.027 .306 352	.162(**) ) .352
Indicating wanting to live outside Ireland for 6 month	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.027 .306 352	1 . 352	-.017 .375 352
Indicating wanting to live in the United States	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.162(**) . 352	-.017 .375 352	1 . 352

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

It can be seen from the correlation analysis that the significance value for the correlation figure, related to the number of American television programmes listed and the indication of wanting to live in the United States is .163 and this being greater than .001 suggests that the consumption of American television programmes would affect the desire to live in the United States. This is emphasised when considering the figure for those students who indicated that they would like to live outside Ireland. It can be seen that the significance value related to the number of American television programmes listed and wanting to live outside Ireland for 6 month - -.027 - is not as strongly correlated.

Though the above correlation deals with the desire to live outside Ireland and in the United States when comparing the desire to live in Spain, Britain and the United States, the exposure of American television programmes would seem to show a relationship with wanting to live in the United States:

**Table 8.9 Correlation figures for those who want to live in Britain and Spain and their consumption of American media**

		Number of American programmes listed	Wanting to live in Spain	Wanting to live in Britain
Number of American television programmes listed	Pearson Sig. (1-tailed) N	1 . 352	-.061 .129 352	.007 .445 353
Indicating wanting to live in Spain	Pearson Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.061 .129 352	1 . 353	-.081 .064 352
Indicating wanting to live in Britain	Pearson Sig. (1-tailed) N	.007 .445 353	-.081 .064 352	1 . 352

Quite clearly, certainly when compared against wanting to live in Spain or in Britain, a relationship exists between watching American programmes and the desire to live in the United States for at least six months; the more American programmes watched the more positive the effect upon wanting to live in the United States against living in Spain or Britain. It is probably no surprise that the active television viewing of another culture and another country may encourage some desire to actually go to that country but it can also be implied that the consumption of American musical artists also affects the desire to want to live in America for at least six months.

This correlation between a heightened receptivity to American artists and an aspiration to live in the United States is repeated when considering the relationship between musical artists' country of origin and the desire to live in the United States:

**Table 8.10 Correlation figure for those who want to live outside Ireland and specifically in the United States and their consumption of American music artists**

		Number of American Music artists listed	Wanting to live outside Ireland	Wanting to live in the United States
Number of American music artists listed	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	1 . 352	-.070 .096 353	.122* .011 352
Indicating wanting to live outside Ireland for 6 month	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	-.070 .096 353	1 . 352	-.017 .374 353
Indicating wanting to live in the United States	Pearson Correlation Sig. (1-tailed) N	.122* .011 352	-.017 .374 353	1 . 352

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Clearly America is seen as a desirable place to live and an element helping to fuel this desire is young peoples' consumption of American culture. Another important way that *America* - but particularly representative *Americans* - can be seen as influencing identity is the choice of role models for young people.

## 8.7 Role Model Identification

Giddens points out that the choices we make that direct the sense of who we are affected 'by group pressure and the visibility of role models, as well as by socioeconomic circumstances' (1991:82). Role models can indeed be significant influences in the choices we make in constructing *who we are* and Smyth *et al.*, while accepting that American cultural influences are not solely the only globalising effect in Ireland, write of the "baggage" that they feel has accompanied American cultural influences in Ireland:

A greater emphasis on the individual rather than the family or community; on material achievement, and on what you do rather than who you are; on pop and movie idols and on being like them if you want to be "cool", are just some of the social ramifications of globalisation in Ireland (2003:111).

An examination of role model identification should allow Smyth *et al.*'s position to be tested further.

The questionnaire offered young people the opportunity to comment upon their role models:

*It is often said that young people need positive role models; people whom they look up to, whose achievement provide inspiration to others. Who do you consider a role model and why?*

Though unsurprisingly a host of role models were offered - from various family members to Michael Collins to Bono - I have generalised the results to the country of origin of role models, whereby Eminem, Tupac or Martin Luther King are labelled *American Public Figures*, but family members are kept distinctly non-national. The results are presented below:

**Table 8.11 Role Models for Young People**

Gender and Class	Family Members as Role Model	Irish Public Role Model	American Public Role Model	British Public Role Model
Working Class Male	13% (N=17)	18.3% (N=24)	20.6% (N=27)	3% (N=4)
Working Class Female	49.2% (N=63)	10.9% (N=14)	11.7 (N=15)	n/a
Middle Class Male	28.1% (N=9)	9.3% (N=3)	21.8% (N=7)	3.1% (N=1)
Middle Class Female	31.1% (N=19)	4.9% (N=3)	22.9% (N=14)	3.2% (N=2)

The choices of role models suggest that American personalities hold some influence upon identity for many young people. It can be seen that over 20% from three of the four cohort groups - the exception is working class females - offered a role model from the United States. This figure for *American Public Role Models* compares dramatically to the lack of comparable placement for any *British Public Role Models* - the figure does not reach above 4% for any cohort and indeed not one single working class female, from a sample of over one hundred,

offered any role models from Britain. The figures clearly show that young people in Dublin place greater identification with *American Public Role Models* - such as Eminem or Tupac - than with *Irish Public Role Models*.

However the label of *American Public Role Models* does not tell us anything about the possible values that any particular role model may offer or what the potential effect is that they may have upon identity. From the sampled comments below it can certainly be suggested that young people welcome not only particular American role models but *Americanised values* presented by role model identification around individuality and celebrity:

Gwen Stefani she has achieved a lot with her music, and she is a strong role model for girls; she teaches women to respect themselves and we are equal to men. Work hard and you will achieve anything (QQ17).

Jessica Simpson! Because she is only 23 and already she's married (happily) [now divorced] with a nice house fabulous career, she rich and happy and famous and, probably not that academic but she's doing much better than a lot of people. And I'd to be like that! (QQ66).

Michael Jackson as a musician, songwriter, singer and entertainer, for his music, charity work, and how he broke down racial past (he was the first black artist on MTV) (QQ75).

Arnold Schwarzenegger - great actor, good politician (QQ150).

Reese Witherspoon for acting, Britney Spears for singing and dancing (QQ154).

Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears. They are both pretty and skinny. I look up to them because I want to be as thin as them. Eminem is also inspiring. (QQ301).

Jennifer Lopez because she is everything I would love to be (QQ350).

From the entire sample it can be seen that 17.9% (N=63) of young people offered a personal role model from the United States. The figure of 17.9% (N=63) might not seem compelling evidence of the Americanisation of aspirational values until compared with the rather telling figure of 12.4% (N=44) who suggested an *Irish Public Role Model* - such as Roy Keane, Bono or Brian O'Driscoll - and the number of young people pointing towards a *British Public Role Model* - such as Robbie Williams and Jamie Carrick - at just 2% (N=7). From the comments above some of the reasons why young people chose a particular role model suggests some level of Americanisation, as implied by Smith *et al.* above. For instance the student at C7 School and C8

School who listed popular American music artists emphasised the values of ‘pretty and skinny’ and how a famous person would be representative ‘of everything I would love to be’, certainly values more associated with the idea of individualism than with ‘community’. An important source of role models is supplied by American musical artists and the effect this can have upon identity is witnessed particularly clearly in how hip-hop is consumed and negotiated differently by young people, but most particularly by young working class males.

## 8.8 Hip-hop shaping identity

Hip-hop is not simply popular but can shape identity and this can be seen in a focus group in B2 School. When the group was asked what they felt about different cultures in Ireland Liam and Luke said:

Luke – Think its all American.

Liam – Yeah the blacks go on like they’re American – even try and do some accent, they think they’re in America.

Jo – Why do you think that is?

Liam – Rap.

Luke – Guy from this school’s a rapper and was on [popular Dublin radio show] and like he’s going on about being a black man trapped in a white man’s body.

Jo – Serious?

Luke – Yeah like he has these rapping contests. You know you be in the toilet and he’s rapping with this other guy, it’s fucking mad.

Liam – Wigger [a white person who appropriates a working class Afro-American *Street* persona].

Jo – And he was on [popular Dublin radio show]?

Liam – Yeah a few times I think.

Luke – Think he’s taking all that rap too seriously. Like he thinks he’s Eminem. I like rap but I like traditional stuff too you know but I’m not going around in like your cap and stuff. They all dress like its America.

Jo – Like baggies [trousers] and stuff?

Luke – Yeah yeah, and hats and shit.



Liam – It's not America you know? (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Joseph Lee, assessing the impact of Anglo-American influences at a time when no one involved in this research was even born, felt that 'our cultural personality is so fragile that the deluge of [media] imports threatens to obliterate rather than invigorate our identity' (1985:86). It can be seen that the understanding of Americanised Hip-hop from these young people looks like the destruction of Irish identity rather than anything that enhances Irish culture and indeed that the views taken seem very much in line with how Hebdige identified sub-cultural meanings as representing 'symbolic challenges to a [established] symbolic order' (1979:92). Luke, like Ray from A1 School, universalises cultural homogenisation as 'American' seeing little distinction between multiculturalism or cultural diversity and the idea that it is Americanisation - 'They all dress like its America'. This engagement seems very explicit in suggesting that a particular 'identity involves being assigned a specific place in the world' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:152). There is a *they* and there is an *us* representing how being Irish is somewhat bounded by integrating with Irish culture against how *they* do not integrate with Irish culture. The '*They*' is fellow students but its placement could be general and/or specific so it might or might not refer specifically to white, black, immigrant or simply Americanised young people. It can be seen that when people appropriate the projected Americanised vernacular expressions and lifestyle images of *American Hip-Hop*, objections can be expressed based around the foreign-ness of '*Rap*'. The issue of '*They*' is obviously important for Luke's sense of social and individual integration but it seems an accepted understanding within the group. The group generally were not positively inclined to consider *inter-racial* relationships for instance but when quizzed on having black friends who dated white people Luke pointed out that 'Yeah but that's different', going on to claim that, 'Its like your mates ain't thinking they're American'.

The concern of Americanisation or more specifically the 'thinking they're American', is a theme not simply within the group at B2 School but is placed within the overall school site of B2 School itself. It was seen above that Liam and Luke's mediated relationship between projected commercialised lifestyles of hip hop - dress styles for instance - were placed as the defining instance of identity for some black and at least one white student. The Afro-American street persona is played out visibly in this school. A walk through the school corridors at class changing times showed many young people creatively *Afro-Americanising* their school uniforms - turned up trousers or bandanas tied to school bags - and particularly the wearing of baseball

hats. This grouping at B2 School is quite obviously uncomfortable in this environment of *Afro-Americanisation*. The *Afro-Americanisation* of identity is not only as 'Wiggers' - which is a white label - but also according to Liam as 'niggers' as 'They're [black students] always slagging each other, "black cunt" they call each other "nigger" as well', that can encourage this movement towards identity understanding which may be negotiated as Americanised - considering the predominant use of 'nigger' by many popular American commercial hip-hop artists. Liam, who did express both intolerance and coded racist views towards immigrants and black people, can be seen as understanding that a cultural borderline exists that marks Ireland from America and that some people are crossing this imagined point - 'It's [Ireland/Dublin] not America you know? - and appropriating the nationalised images of another national identity. However the difficulty with Liam's borders is that they cannot be controlled - all members of this group for instance seem passionate about English soccer clubs and indeed Luke also likes hip-hop as no doubt other group members do. The difficulty with control relates to the difficulty of self-control:

There may be a great global conspiracy to Americanise the planet, a Coca-Cola push into remotest corners, but there's no doubt it is often greeted with a warm welcome, creating just as strong a pull to suck more of it in (Toynbee, 2000:195).

Toynbee's 'warm welcome' can be seen not only in how Ray projected young Moroccans cultural patterns, or in young peoples' cultural consumption but also in Luke's own liking of hip hop.

Though there is something of a 'warm welcome' there is also the unmistakeable tension in people 'thinking they're American' which seems established around speech as fellow students 'even try and do some accent, they think they're in America' according to Liam. In responding to a question asking the group if they might feel more Irish if they spoke the Irish language or played sports, Luke can be seen to emphasise the role an Irish accent can play in declaring belonging:

Luke - Don't think speaking Irish, you know, is that important but like knowing you're Irish... [what I mean is] like accents always tell where you're from I think it's important you's have an accent... Well yeah [I like the Irish accent] but it's important you sound Irish I think... don't know [why I think it is important] just think it sounds great... well it [accent] says where you're from you know?...

Jo - Like knowing that someone in Cork may sound different but they're Irish?

Luke - Yeah yeah Cork accent is strong but they're like Irish. Like in America different parts and different accents but they're all American. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

This general issue of accent can definitely be seen as encouraging inclusiveness into Irish identity, even for Luke the issue of his black friend is their understanding that they are not American. According to some black Dublin people from their experience of life in Dublin, dialect does break down social barriers. A working class Dubliner states that, 'Sometimes when I speak to people that don't know me, as soon as I open my mouth I can see them warming to me because I don't have a different accent as though I was from a different country. It seems to reassure people and break down barriers' (quoted in McCarthy, 2001:62). This was also somewhat expressed with a focus group from C1 School:

Jo – Do accents help you fit in?

Kitty – Yeah for sure. I was mortified them Chinese can't speak English but the young ones are like "What's the story" [strong working class accent].

Deborah – I was in Dr Quirky's [amusement arcade in O'Connell Street] and like these two black young-ones are on the dance machine and I'm like, "Are you finished with that?" and they're like "Yeah but I wouldn't do it" [strong Dublin working class accent]. I was like shocked!

Cathy – Yeah like with the [older] chinks it's, they wouldn't be able to speak English and the young-fellas come over to you and its like, "Alright". (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though accents can be seen here as marking something familiarly shared what is surprising about the above comments is that the females – who attend a school which has black students – should find it surprising that black people could have strong Dublin working class accents similar to their own. The comments suggest a distance between these white Dublin females and their co-educated black peers.

Though the group may hold a certain social distance to black fellow students there was certainly some understanding of how a hip-hop persona, as with the B2 School grouping, would or could affect identity:

Cathy – Well you have guys trying to look black [in a hop-hop manner].

[Edith to Deborah] – You think you're black. (Interview conducted Spring 2005). American hip hop is quite important to young people in developing their self-definitions, and in particular amongst those attending working class schools. A point highlighted by Neate, is just how embedded hip hop is globally:

Hip hop matters to me and now, I think, it matters to everyone else too. You see, some people may not have noticed and some people may not like it, but the truth is we're living on a hip hop planet (2003:5).

It is very difficult to miss the point that many young people are indeed members, or select affiliate members, of Neate's 'hip hop planet'. Culturally hip-hop - seen particularly through the style of dress - *is* the most visible and popular expression of Americanisation upon musical taste and dress in Dublin. No other popular musical genre is either as global, or as specifically American as hip-hop. Like other musical cultures - punk, grunge etc. - hip-hop can certainly be seen as affecting manners of dress and undoubtedly with some young people manners of behaviour.

### ***8.8.1 Hip-hop as marking difference and resistance***

Looking specifically at the entire list of role models offered from the sample of 31 students at C4 School gives us some window of explanation on why American hip-hop icons can affect identity:

Tupac because he keep it real and tell people how it is (QQ79).

Haven't got one (QQ80)

Not sure (QQ81)

Bruce Lee, in the way he used his human body to the most physical extent he could (QQ82)

Someone is expresses him or her self and who is friendly and kind to others (QQ83)

Eminem. Because he does what he wants (QQ84)

Eminem because his lyrics are so down to earth and it shows us that he's come through a lot to be a star why can't we (QQ85)

I don't have a role model (QQ86)

Kurt Cobain is my role model. I think everything he did was great. He was an excellent guitarist (QQ87)

Palma Anderson (QQ88)

Roy Keane because he is great (QQ90)

Eminem (QQ93)

Linkin Park. Yes there is I consider Linkin Park band members [role models] (QQ94)

Wrestling [so assume some wrestlers] because I like the violence (QQ99)

Eminem because he is a great rapper and I love him (QQ100)

Your Da is a good role model he is someone to look up at. That is if they weren't locked up or something (QQ101)

Myself (QQ102)

Dad because he takes everything as it come and remains cool and clam (QQ103)

My main role models are famous martial artists such as Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris, Steven Segal, Jean Claude Van Damme, because of where they are in life today because of their fighting skills (QQ104)

Roy Keane because he is proud to be Irish and he is proud of his country (QQ106)

Bill Gates because of the money he earns (QQ107)

Tupac (QQ108)

Yes I think you should have a role model because if you did you could try to become what they are or better (like Eminem) (QQ109)

The influence of American hip-hop is quite evident with seven students listing explicit hip-hop artists as their role models and one listing Linkin Park, a band that fusions elements of hip-hop with hard rock. As a genre hip-hop is very diverse - not simply musically but as we saw above from Liam and Luke's identification it is about music, clothes, attitude, lifestyle - and the hip-hop influence is also evident beyond the music sphere with two students above identifying Martial Arts figures, a film genre with an established connection to some hip-hop artists, as role models.

Smyth *et al.*'s description of 'the social ramifications of globalisation in Ireland' (2003:111) and the analysis of role model identification would emphatically suggest that young people at C4 School largely fall within their characterisation. Though family role models are accepted - two students offered their fathers - as are Irish public sporting figures - Roy Keane is also offered by two students - the most popularly selected role models for these students are quite

obviously American personalities who emphasise particular values for these young people. The most popular role model for young people in C4 School is Eminem - offered by five students - with another hip-hop artist - Tupac - inspiring two other students, and another American - Bill Gates and his wealth - inspiring one other student (indeed Gates' wealth also inspired another working class student from another school 'cause he's so rich' (QQ180)). Out of the suggested twenty-three role models presented from the C7 School sample fourteen are identifiable as American personalities but importantly just under one-quarter of role model choices are hip-hop artists; hip-hop quite clearly articulates something important in the social environment of the young people at C7 School.

David Gauntlett rightly highlights how central music can be in people lives and how music artists afford potential role model status:

The field of pop music offers many icons and potential role models. Pop music today is not only the sounds on the recordings we buy, or hear on the radio or played in shops, cafes, bars and clubs, but is also the carefully packaged set of images we see through television and magazines (Gauntlett, 2002:216).

Gauntlett's 'carefully packaged' theme is evident within his typology of role models:

1. The 'straightforward success' role model;
2. The 'triumph over circumstances' role model;
3. The 'challenging stereotypes' role model;
4. The 'wholesome' role model;
5. The 'outsider' role model;
6. The family role model

(Gauntlett, 2002:214-215).

Gauntlett himself identifies Eminem - the most popular role model identified in the C4 School - as an 'outsider' role model for young people. This type of role model is, 'a hero to those who reject conventional social expectations, such as... Eminem' (Gauntlett, 2002:215). The popularity and meaning of Eminem as a role model points to more than an 'outsider' model in the context of C4 School. It can be seen that some students who listed Eminem as a role model do not fall precisely within Gauntlett's categorisation but could be seen as falling somewhere within Gauntlett's overall role model typology. Eminem - 'The 'triumph over circumstances' role model' - was mentioned because he was inspiring in what he achieved - seen in (QQ109)

and (QQ85) - and for another student it was Eminem's celebrity and fortune - 'The 'straightforward success' role model' - allowing him to do 'what he wants' (QQ84) that was a key for identification. Rather obviously some young people at C4 School emphasise identification with particular American role models because of certain admirable values. How C4 School students negotiated various role models cannot be seen as operated across schools but what can be seen is some general impact from American icons shaping identity.

Perhaps in trying to explain why young people at C4 School so strongly emphasise not simply American role models but American hip-hop role models is somewhat addressed by the popularity of Tupac within the school sample - though only mentioned by 2 people as a role model he was listed eleven times by students in the C4 School within their musical preferences. It is possible that listing Tupac suggests something of how music connects to the particular classed social environment of young people at C4 School. Though Eminem has offered certain political protest raps - *Toy Soldiers* being the most well known - it is unquestionably Tupac who posthumously continues to be both commercially successfully but also overtly political in his raps. It might be recalled that one student listed Tupac as a role model, 'because he keep it real and tell people how it is' (QQ79). This comment seems to directly point to the political message evident in some of Tupac's raps:

when will I finally get to rest from this suppression  
they punish tha people that's askin questions  
and those that possess  
steal from tha ones without possessions  
tha message I stress  
to make it stop  
study your lessons  
don't settle for less  
even tha genius asks questions  
be grateful for blessins  
don't ever change  
keep your essence  
tha powers in tha people and tha politics we address  
always do your best

don't let this pressure make ya panic  
and when ya get stranded  
and things don't go tha way ya planned it  
dreaming of riches  
in a position of makin' a difference  
politicians and hipocrits  
they don't wanna listen  
(Tupac, Me Against the World)

Consistently - though certainly not exclusively - throughout his short career Tupac offered alternative political comments on how both America and the globe are politically structured against *tha people*. Understanding that this School, from all the schools that participated in the research, would most probably be identified as the most disadvantaged (the facilities were minimal and the infrastructure within the school appeared neglected) certainly when compared to other working class schools in the research but unquestionably when compared to middle class schools, suggests a way of reading, for young people in this school, their disadvantaged social and individual position through American hip-hop.

Though the above consideration has focused upon American hip-hop as affecting identity the dominant preferences for music and TV programmes may suggest varying degrees of an American pressure upon identity, a process generally affecting all young people given the widespread consumption of American culture. A consideration of the questionnaire comments from the sample at A4 School also shows a theme of Americanisation. From the sample of twenty-one students at A4 School it can be seen of the twenty suggested role models only three are American; 'Madonna. She fulfilled her dream' (QQ139); 'Gwen Stefani (No Doubt). She's so inventive and creative she has a voice and style all her own and displays it 24-7' (QQ134) and; 'Famous actresses like Julian Roberts, Drew Barrimore (people in magazines)' (QQ127). This compares to fourteen of twenty-three suggested American role models from C4 School and four of fourteen suggested American role models from C2 School. Though it may seem that the young middle class females at A4 School are less likely to suggest an American role model than students in C2, C3 or C4 School, a perusal of the justification for choosing particular Irish role models from A4 School students may show an implied projected Americanised social value of individualism; the individualism of not needing a role model - 'I don't have a particular role



model. I base what I am on who I am' (QQ140); 'I don't consider anyone my role model. I'm my own person and can make my own decisions not based on one else' (QQ137); or the fulfilment of material ambitions - 'My sister because she works hard for what she wants. She will get so far in life' (QQ124); or the self-confidence to be an individual - 'Dolores O'Riordan from the Cranberries because she doesn't care about what people think about her. She does what she wants to do' (QQ130). This issue of individuality is far from restricted to A4 School. Looking over the entirety of the questionnaire responses regarding role model identification, it can be seen that many young people are explicit in not offering any particular role model because it was felt a restriction upon individuality:

I don't have a role model. I'm me (QQ69)

I don't have any role model. I depend on myself, no-one really influences me. I don't really look up to anyone. Except Jordan! (QQ78)

Myself (QQ102)

No one. I think I shouldn't be like anyone, just myself (QQ112)

I don't consider anybody my role model. I don't like to copy people or do what they like because that would not develop the personality I have but copy someone else (QQ142)

I don't really have any role models because personally I think why bother wasting your time coping and modelling yourself on someone else when you are most likely a better person than them (QQ143)

Don't really have a role model just know what I want to do in life (QQ161)

I don't have a role model personally I like to be myself, I am a free think[er] I don't want to follow any[one] else as I feel it is my life and I only have one so live it the way I want to (QQ213).

I don't agree with role models (QQ239)

I don't consider a role model you should be yourself [though they add] well I like Eminem and 2pac (QQ269)

I don't need or have a role model, if people really want to do something, I don't think that they'd need someone to inspire them (QQ342).

Perhaps an even greater indication of the individualisation of identity is that slightly over one fifth - 20.5% (N=72) - of the sample did not even address the question of role models.

If 'traditional cultural icons' (Smyth *et al.*, 2003:59) read historical figures central in the establishment of an *Invented Ireland* or a particular vision of the Nation then it is evident that young people no longer - as an immediate identification - accept 'traditional cultural icons' as motivating figures of achievement. When 30 years ago one may certainly have expected to encounter the names of Michael Collins, Padraic Pearse or Tone and de Valera and perhaps even Connolly or St Patrick, as motivating role models for young people in Dublin, contemporarily it is only Michael Collins, from the questionnaire sample, who was even mentioned by any students as an inspiring role model. Tupac and Eminem are a more inspiring role model for young people than Tone, Pearse or Rory O'Connor. Young people's embracement of American role models against 'traditional cultural icons and role models' points at some measure of cultural empathy towards American cultural icons and what they can be perceived to represent.

## 8.9 Conclusion

What speaks of a very changed picture of the Nation for young people from an Ireland of maybe only 10-20 years ago is how O'Toole identifies Ireland, for some 150 years having been 'scattered, splintered, atomised' due to emigration and consequentially:

Ireland is a diaspora, and as such is both a real place and a remembered place, both the far west of Europe and the home back east of the Irish-American. Ireland is something that often happens elsewhere (1997:12).

Though the continued construction of Irishness may indeed 'happen elsewhere' it is not inevitably constructed positively towards the most celebrated part of the Irish Diaspora. Though most young people have a relationship towards American cultural commodities that speaks of deep appreciation and familiarisation this relationship is seemingly not enough to encourage an acceptance of Irish-Americans as fellow Irish people. This framing of Irishness is unquestionably seen through a rejection of the Irish-American or the Irish in America Diaspora; people who are not seen or considered as immediately belonging to, nor legitimately ascriptive members of, the Irish Nation. However it should be understood how quickly this framing towards Irish-Americans and indeed America in general can change. The war in Iraq is undoubtedly having some effect upon how some young people may generally read the foreign policy of the United States and should the perception, if not the practice, of the United States foreign policy change

this would no doubt led to a more positive viewing of America and most probably a less critical approach towards America, and what America can imply.

Though the ‘happens elsewhere’ components of identity can still be employed it is very difficult to understand young peoples’ level of engagement towards the Nation as only a process that ‘happens elsewhere’. Rather, if anything, the Nation only *happens here* or is understood to essentially only *happen here*. A fundamental notion within O’Toole’s ‘happens elsewhere’ is how he rightly identifies that when emigration is the established option for an improved standard of living people disconnect from a sensing of social agency:

when you grow up in a country which it is hard to imagine as a political entity, then equally it is hard to imagine a way in which you might help to change that place. Change becomes personal, not political: you change your location, not your society (1997:13).

Though ‘change’ may have become even more personalised there is certainly a more secure level of engagement with Irish identity for many young people now than what O’Toole highlights about Irish identity from the early 1990s. Young peoples’ willingness towards travel points not at economic opportunities but rather at the social experiences that could be gained from living in another country.

Young people in Dublin not only generally consume American cultural commodities, and rightly draw inspiration from certain *American Public Role Models*, but this engagement is often conducted on an critical level - not a wholesale endorsement of a singular understanding of the United States that Said views as the dominant United States ideology ‘depict[ing] the country as free from taint, more unified around one iron-clad major narrative of innocent triumph’. Young people engage with America through a tension of appreciation but also anxiety. Postman makes a very acute description of how young people in Dublin would seem to engage with American television programmes:

American television programs are in demand [globally] not because America is loved but because American television is loved (1985:86).

Certainly how young people involved in this research seem to conduct themselves is along these lines of extreme fondness for American cultural commodities but also a critical engagement with how power may be exercised by the United States. Though nearly a majority of the sample may have wished to live in the United States one gets very little impression that they want to stay

there indefinitely. Though these processes of identification point at some familiarisation and comfort with America it can be understood that young people emphasise America as both simultaneously familiar and different to Ireland and Irish identity; Irish identity continues to imply something other than an Americanisation of Irish social values.

Constructions of America and Americans shape Irish identity and consumption of American culture helps shape a sense of self. It has been seen that the theme of *American Public Role Model* identification is quite pronounced for young people and that Americanisation, through the adoption of liberal individualism for instance, appears to be affecting individual self identity and also a sense of collective identity - not simply that many young people are identifying with non-Irish figures and *values* but in the picture of the Nation that this may present. Selective American entertainment values may have been adopted in Ireland - a cult towards celebrity is certainly present for instance with some young people, as is a particularly presented Americanised mode of individuality. However notwithstanding the similarity in why certain role models may be valued - fame, success, wealth, talent etc. - the principal understandings is found within the tension young people have towards *America* and *Americans* that serves to specifically frame Irishness around who are included and who are excluded under an Irish identity.

# Chapter 9

## The Immigrant Other

Ireland has rapidly transformed from a country of emigration to a country experiencing immigration. Between 1996-2005 over half a million people are estimated to have migrated to Ireland ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)). Though many people in this half a million figure would have been returning Irish people, many would also have been Chinese, Polish, Nigerian, English or Italian nationals relocating to Ireland. Indicating the extent of recent migration trends the Census of 2006 shows that from a population approaching 4.2 million people in southern Ireland over 400,000 were non-Irish born (ibid). Given that any individual or group's contact with different cultural identities can obviously affect self or collective identity by challenging, creating or reinforcing beliefs it would be unsurprising if this transformation altered the dynamics of Irish identity and, at least, opened questions towards what it may mean to be Irish. The increasing presence of immigrants in Ireland has, for Walsh, certainly raised the spectre of how Ireland will respond to cultural diversity:

For Ireland as a host nation, the acceptance and understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity is one of the most important challenges faced by us in recent years (2000:153).

Though these 'challenges' are ongoing, and indeed pre-date any immigration over the past 10 or 15 years, there has certainly been some immediate cultural changes in how urban space in Dublin can be employed. This is exemplified in how pockets of Dublin City have become *ethnicised*, as around the north-inner city which has a concentration of Chinese and African commercial enterprises and residents.

This chapter will examine young peoples' views towards immigrants and consider what it can tell us about young peoples' understandings of Irish identity. What will be seen is how young peoples' negotiation of immigration and immigrants can be broken down into various differing, sometimes overlapping and sometimes simultaneously existing attitudes, which helps loosely shape Irish identity for young people. On one level some young people display negativity

towards immigrants. This negativity is fundamentally grounded in an economic discourse that can structure immigrants as both economic liabilities and also economic competitors. This economic approach can essentially underpin and help justify a view towards segmenting people differently as legitimately or illegitimately belonging in Ireland. Immigrants' right to be in Ireland can sometimes be disputed and problematised and with this any social responsibilities that Ireland, and the Irish, may have towards other people in Ireland can be contested. This contestation can mean that celebrated values of Irishness for young people - like being welcoming, friendly and helpful - can be conditionally withdrawn from people who are placed as illegitimately being in Ireland. At the most extreme, it will also be seen, that some views towards immigrants can, and are, utilised as an Other to Irishness in how certain young people articulate self-understandings of Irish identity. Some views are forthright in positioning immigrants as limiting Irishness and possibly even detrimentally threatening Irish identity.

However there are other attitudes towards immigrants which are formatted in more positive terms that can both interact with negative views or stand separate from them. Though there are a number of fundamentals within this positive approach the overriding theme is, again, economic. Instead of immigrants acting as competitors for employment or as economic liabilities, immigrants can be viewed as making a valued contribution to Irish economic performance. There is a level of acceptance on the part of some young people that the Irish economy, and Irish standards of living, would not be maintained without the input of immigrant labour. This approach towards immigrants will be seen as widespread, particularly with young middle class people.

Though an economic discourse permeates discussions of immigration there is also some recognition and appreciation of the cultural difference and diversity that immigration can offer Irish society. Cultural difference can be appreciated by young people as an enriching experience. As Fanning rightly highlights, immigration is a direct challenge to 'claims of homogeneity within Irish society' (2002:185) and some young people have responded to this by welcoming notions of multiculturalism and difference. Some young peoples' views towards cultural differences are supportive of multiculturalism as a movement away from notions of mono-ethnic Irishness, particularly as formatted under the Traditional Paradigm, and a movement towards an inclusive Irishness, often articulated around notions of individual self-identification. This view can place immigrants as culturally contributing to Ireland and moving Ireland towards a

multicultural space of difference. Some young people are candid in welcoming immigrants, viewing immigrants as culturally valued for the contribution they have made, and will make, to Ireland.

### ***9.1 Multiculturalism and Negotiating Immigrants***

When young people were asked in the questionnaire why they might like to live outside Ireland the most popular response related to the general life experiences that would be garnered from living in another culture. Though this celebration of multiculturalism is placed outside Ireland it can also be seen that multiculturalism, and receptivity to different cultural encounters, can be located specifically within Ireland. Certainly Dennis from A3 School seems open towards multiculturalism:

Over the last two years we've had different nationalities in the school, Russian, Germans, Slovaks we have been opened to their way of life, its like, if they hadn't had come to the school we wouldn't know half of what we know. Like there was a Dutch person and we hung around with him and learned a lot about his country so that's one thing but you know, don't know, if publicly Ireland or Dublin has changed much because of immigrants? (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Though Dennis is unsure of the effects cultural difference may have had upon Ireland or Dublin in general looking at the questionnaire data there is a widespread feeling relating to an appreciation that symbolically *Multiculturalism* is a significant marker of Irish identity.

Within the sample 67.3% (N=214) of young people valued *Multiculturalism* as either a *Very Important* or *Important* personal marking of Irishness. This is a higher symbolic meaning towards Irishness than given to the much promoted symbols of Irish identity such as the *GAA*, *U2*, *Irish literature*, *speaking the Irish language*, the *Catholic Church* or *Folk Music*. Though *Multiculturalism* may symbolically mean something for the majority of questionnaire respondents it can be seen that the value is privileged more by young middle class people and also more emphasised by females than males. The results also show that the value of *Multiculturalism* for the Generalised Other is somewhat mixed:

**Table 9.1 Classed and Gendered Attitudes towards Multiculturalism<sup>7</sup>**

Social Class and Gender	Multiculturalism as Important or Very Important for Me	Multiculturalism as Important or Very Important for Others	Multiculturalism as Not Important for Me	Multiculturalism as Not Important for Others
Working Class Male	54.6% (N=59)	70.9% (N=73)	45.4% (N=49)	29.1% (N=30)
Working Class Female	73.3% (N=88)	74.4% (N=90)	25% (N=30)	23.1% (N=28)
Middle Class Male	67.8% (N=21)	53.1% (N=17)	32.2% (N=10)	46.8% (N=15)
Middle Class Female	78% (N=46)	67.8% (N=40)	22.3% (N=13)	32.2% (N=19)

All cohorts symbolically recognize a value in *Multiculturalism* but it can be seen that both working class cohorts cohort privileges, though only slightly in the case of working class females, the Generalised Other as placing more symbolic emphasis in *Multiculturalism* than they personally would. This privileging of *Multiculturalism* for the Generalised Other is completely reversed when considering the responses from middle class students who regard themselves as placing more significance in *Multiculturalism* than the Generalised Other. Though the symbolic significance of *Multiculturalism* may be seen as differently valued by different cohorts - based upon gender and class backgrounds - what the results do show is that each cohort, to varying degrees, is fundamentally accepting towards *Multiculturalism* as symbolically signifying Irishness.

<sup>7</sup> R value of .019 for Personal symbolic attachment to Multiculturalism based upon Class, and R value of .000 for Personal symbolic attachment to Multiculturalism based upon Gender. R value of .001 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to Multiculturalism based upon Class, and R value of .006 for Generalised Others symbolic attachment to Multiculturalism based upon Gender.



MacLachlan and O'Connell have written how in Ireland the 'population haemorrhage sapped national self-confidence and left its scar on the collective memory of all but the most recent generation' (2000:4). For these authors:

One might then have reasonably assumed that the concept of people actually wanting to come to live in the country's town and cities would be welcomed as the sign of a new, prosperous and attractive identity (MacLachlan and O'Connell, 2000:4-5).

Though MacLachlan and O'Connell feel that there is a lack of recognition of the positive endorsement immigration offers to Ireland, young people do - from 'the most recent generation' - make a direct connection between Ireland and a 'prosperous and attractive identity'. When asked if there was any value in multiculturalism a group in A4 School linked the positive benefits with a Tra-modern view of Irish identity:

Sandra - I suppose it [multiculturalism] shows that Ireland is welcoming to different cultures.

Pauline - I suppose it does show it's welcoming.

Jenny - They have to come here but don't want to be here.

Sandra - If we didn't let any other cultures in I suppose it would show the whole of Ireland we're racist people. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Jenny, an Australian by birth and self-definition, saw some immigrants, like herself, as not necessarily wanting to be in Ireland but having been forced through circumstances to be in Ireland. This theme was also picked up in C7 School:

[I would change] Intolerance [in Ireland]. We're so abusive towards other cultures and races without realising that they are people too that don't particularly want to be here but are because of troubles at home (QQ303).

Jenny's experience as an immigrant has made her unsympathetic towards the notion that the Irish are generally welcoming:

Like racial comments and shit...yeah that's really big in Ireland... I was called "Aussie prossie" for years when I came here. Australian prostitute... "Aussie prossie" and ok I'm 11! (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Why Jenny was labelled "Aussie prossie" was a theme touched upon in Chapter 6. Christopher, from the A1 School, favoured England against Australia in sporting contests, 'Yeah hate the

Australians'. It should be understood that Christopher's view was middle class bantering - *slagging* - based around the theme of Australian sports people as successful and boastfully loud in their achievements. Christopher's view would hardly lend itself to an emotional viewpoint of racialising Australians as prostitutes, rather it is a view encouraged through a sporting ethos of bantering with opponents. However emphasising that not all encounters of abuse could be read as *slagging*, a student born in England and identifying herself as English, from C7 School, responded to the question '*If you had the power to change one thing about Irish society, what would you change and why?*' with:

I would change the way some of them [the Irish] view foreigners. I hate seeing "British scum" scrawled on walls (QQ287).

This instance of abuse obviously has a historical focus and essentially, unlike Christopher's bantering, has a deeper meaning and intent to abuse.

This issue of abuse was directly touched upon by students when asked, *If you had the power to change one thing about Irish society, what would you change and why?* The highest category of things to change is Racism with 18.8% (N=66) of respondents suggesting that they would address racism in Irish society:

racism and prejudice are too high here. Irish people can be very ignorant about colour and race (QQ125)

prejudges/stereotyping/racism. I see too much of this everyday, people avoiding the homeless, abusing foreigners etc. (QQ134)

racism, because we are all the same inside (QQ163)

Racism. I would change it because everyone has a right to a good life and not be abused for being a different colour (QQ186)

I would change racism because everyone should be treated equally regardless of colour gender or sex (QQ188)

racism, people black or white or even the yellow race are all the same and it sickens me to think, people would judge people by the colour of their skin or even their (QQ213)

racism, because it can make people feel so insignificant (QQ252)

From the comments above it is quite clear that some students express strong anti-racist views based essentially around racism being unfair, and reinforcing the trend identified by Mac Gréil

(1996) in his *Prejudice in Ireland* projects that Irish people were decreasingly likely to racialise people. Some young people challenged racism within the context that Ireland is a tolerant country and open to cultural difference. Another factor for challenging racism was any international perception coupling Irish identity with racism:

Brain - Well like some people are racist they're just like that you know they hate anyone or anything that isn't familiar. Maybe it's always been like that in Ireland but we're only seeing it now. I'd hate if it was like that, you know if it was that every Irish person was thought of as racist.

Anne - But we're not racist though whenever we have exchange students we're always like really good about it, or when like foreign people we don't be like "oh you're so different" its not like that you know.

Jo - But what if Irish people were always thought of as being racist? How would you feel about being Irish then?

Anne - But we're not though. I wouldn't like it if we were but I don't think we're that bad. Like with us I think we wouldn't be racist. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

That 18.7% (N=66) of students sampled consider Racism a problem within Irish society surely speaks of a perception that some people in Irish society hold an ability to connect Irishness with a particular notion of who the Irish are – at the extreme Irish people are white for instance, though this extreme cannot be supported by any widespread *articulated* perception on the part of young people.

The desire to address racism, as with the symbolic support for *Multiculturalism*, is not uniformly felt across class and gender cohorts. Young working class males show themselves to be significantly less concerned with identifying racism as a problem than other cohorts. The Table below outlines what percentages from each cohort identified racism as a problem but also gives the proportions of these sixty-six people who identified racism as something they would address in Irish society:

**Table 9.2 Addressing Racism**

Class and Gender	Address Racism within Irish society	Proportions
Working class male	11.3% (N=11)	16.7% (N=11)
Working class female	29% (N=32)	48.5% (N=32)
Middle class male	25% (N=7)	10.6% (N=7)
Middle class female	29.6% (N=16)	24.2% (N=16)

As with the symbolic valuing for *Multiculturalism* it is evident that a gendered view towards addressing racism presents itself; young females are more inclined to identify racism as a problem than young males. There would also appear to be some class effect. Though only 17.3% (N=61) of the sample are middle class females they made up 24.2% (N=16) of the proportion that would address racism. However gender may affect how different people identify Racism, for example ‘Aussie prossie’ is *slagging* from one perspective and abusive from another, views towards racism may also be affected by class factors<sup>8</sup>.

The concerns from middle class students towards addressing racism could possibly reflect how middle class students may have a greater tendency to have been victims of some racial abuse, or know more victims of racial abuse, as they have both a more multinational background than working class students; 5.4% (N=14) of working class students were not born in Ireland compared to 12.9% (N=12) of middle class people and when 16.3% (N=42) of working class people have at least 1 Irish born parent the corresponding figure for middle class people is more than double this at 39.8% (N=37). Young middle class people are more likely to have friends who may not have been born in Ireland, than young working class people:

**Table 9.3 Social Distance as Expressed through the immediate Social Contact**

Social Class	Friends Non-Irish Born	Friends Parents Non-Irish Born
Working Class	58% (N=150)	63.3% (N=164)
Middle Class	91.3% (N=85)	90.1% (N=87)

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps something of how class and gender may affect understandings of racism can be seen in how two students with Chinese parents - both from C2 School – would address racism in Irish society:

Racism, because it's a very big issue and it affects the Irish 'friendly' reputation. I always hear a lot of discrimination against refugees and foreign immigrants (QQ36)

Racism, cultural knowledge, more respect for free education, accept different races like most countries are, because I heard a lot of stories about people being emotionally abused and attacked because of their race (QQ48)

If racism is 'a very big issue' would one not expect either of these students to have experienced some form of racism? But perhaps each daily encounter racist comments but they are not considered racists rather they are perceived as *slagging*.

The Table shows clearly that young middle class people are more networked into internationalised relationships than young working class people (9.3). Though a majority of both cohorts' identify having non-Irish born friends it is evident that the numbers are commanding within the middle class cohort.

This international networking would seem to reflect greater receptivity towards multicultural differences:

Jenny - It's good to mix though. We've Japanese friends in our school and stuff and English friends outside school. They show me what they eat and stuff, different culture, what they do in Japan. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though young middle class people may be more consciously networked into international relationships if we consider issues relating to personally engaging with cultural difference it is seen that young people - irrespective of class or gender - demonstrate, on the one hand, a mixed view towards formally engaging with cultural differences but, on the other hand, a commanding openness towards socially mixing with other people irrespective of cultural or national backgrounds:

**Table 9.4 Social distance expressed through wanting to know about other cultures and discriminating against friendships**

Social Class and Gender	Would like school to teach about other cultures	Would <i>Not</i> avoid any friendship with someone from ethnic background	Would <i>Not</i> avoid any friendship with someone not born in Ireland
Working class male	45.9% (N=57)	89.8% (N=115)	93% (N=121)
Working class female	62.9% (N=78)	94.4% (N=119)	95.3% (N=121)
Middle class male	78.1% (N=25)	90.6% (N=29)	93.7% (N=30)
Middle class female	76.6% (N=47)	98.3% (N=60)	100% (N=61)

Though overall a majority of young people - 61.6% (N=207) - answered positively to the question of their school teaching about other cultures it is seen that there is some division in the responses. Generally, working class students are the more resistant to the suggestion of formally

learning about other cultures – notably working class males - than middle class students where a commanding majority of over three-quarters of middle class females and males supported the opportunity to learn about other cultures. Though there may be some division around formally learning about other cultures within schools the issue of discriminatory practice clearly unites young people.

Quite obviously young people consider themselves open to social encounters with people from ethnic groupings or non-Irish born backgrounds. Even though working class males, once again, show the greatest attitudinal distance from other cohorts it would be incorrect to present their attitudes as restrictive when 89.8% (N=115) would *Not* avoid any friendship with someone from an ethnic background and when 93% (N=121) would *Not* avoid any friendship with someone not born in Ireland.

If these findings are compared to Mac Gréil's there has certainly been a liberalisation of Irish attitudes regarding acceptance. For instance Mac Gréil found that only 41.1% of his sample would 'Have as close friend or closer' a Black American – compared to the 87.2% who would accept a White American – that 42.6% would form a friendship with a Pakistani, 49.6% an Indian and 58.9% with Coloureds (1996:151). Though Mac Gréil rightly points out that levels of social distance 'may be negative and problematic in regards to Irish racism' (1996:152) these figures are an improvement on Mac Gréil's findings, where the majority of young people sampled actually have non-Irish born friends. Clearly there is some openness to social engagement with people from differing cultures and though there is this suggestion of openness towards cultural difference and experience, a greater understanding of how immigrant affect Irish identity can be seen in how young people position and place immigrants in Irish society.

## 9.2 Placement of Immigrants

It will be recalled from Chapter 6 that certain values of sociality - *Friendliness*, *Socially co-operative* and *Welcoming to Strangers* - were marked as central in young peoples' construction of Irishness. Such viewpoints can also be seen to inform certain perspectives towards immigrants:

[Irishness is] to welcome all nationalities into our country and to treat them the way we would like to be treated (QQ5)

Being tolerant to other cultures – we need to be more tolerant (QQ 293)

I would make them [Irish people] more tolerant to travellers and other ethnic minorities and to refugees (QQ304).

[I would change] The attitude Irish people have towards other nations coming into the country (QQ 306)

Some conceptualisation of tolerance is a theme with the comments above but when asked if being Irish was considered a tolerant identity, some students in A3 did not think so:

Barry - No sure there was a referendum a few months ago where 80% of the country voted to like kick everyone out or just not let them in anymore.

Peter - It should be thought [of being tolerant] considering how like in history all the Irish people left, the famine. It should be more tolerant. It's not.

Nell - I think it is changing at the moment. Take a while before we all become tolerant to one another. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

An undercurrent of measured accommodation towards immigrants was a common theme in A1 School:

Paul - I think most people are fairly tolerant unless they have some personal vendetta against one person then apply that to everybody of the same race that's bullshit. That could be the reason that some people don't accept [immigrants].

Christopher - I think the majority of people accept people coming in and they're more or less happy they're coming in. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Paul, quite clearly, individualises and dismisses any reasoning for racism with both himself and Christopher framing Irish society as essentially accommodating towards immigrants. Indeed Paul's rejection of Trimble's characterisation of a mono-cultural southern Ireland showed his own consistency in allowing one person's view - Trimble's - to stand as applying to all people; 'Something that's happened to you, you can't judge a whole country on it'.

From all schools researched Paul's A1 School was the most pronounced in linking a view towards immigrants that emphasised the positive economic contribution immigrants can make to Irish economic performance:

Ray - There's a bit of a change now cause there's never been a black person, like since the nineties they're slowly coming into the country, it's probably making the country a better place probably as they're all here to work and stuff.

Tom – But then they're all taking our jobs aren't they?... Not the black people but people in general. I didn't mean it like that! Don't get me wrong. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Tom can be seen actively rephrasing his question, and was challenged by other group members for suggesting immigrants were 'all taking our jobs', and goes on to distance himself from the suggestion that 'they're all taking our jobs' and indeed the impetus from the group was that immigrants were a positive factor helping improve Irish living standards. However the jobs immigrants are placed in is highly selective.

Kate, from A3 School, felt that 'Lots of Irish people probably wouldn't work in the jobs they're [immigrants] doing. Would they?' '[T]he jobs they're doing' is perceived as highly demarcated particularly for middle class people. Eamon, from A1 School, felt that:

Its good to see all them [Immigrants] but if you hired them to work in a shop you got to be sure they know what they're doing and stuff like, if you're going to pay them. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Eamon's view of immigrants is framed by the perspective of employers. This economic argument - 'they're all here to work' as phrased by Ray - was even more pronounced in another focus group from A1 School.

The debate surrounding the response to David Trimble's characterisation of the Republic of Ireland as essentially pathetic, monoethnic and monocultural was informative about how these young people viewed immigrants through an economic lens:

Patrick - No [Trimble's characterisation is not a factual representation].

Lee – Slightly, to an extent. We don't accept many other like races. And like we're a country, like Britain has been having loads of races in it like twenty years before, we haven't any. We've only gotten that many immigrants in the last ten years or so.

Paul - Yeah but we had nobody to immigrate into 10 years ago. No jobs or anything here in the eighties so who the hell would come here?

Lee - Getting used to the fact of foreigners, we're getting foreigners in our country!

Edward - Just like real protective of our country and this like the kind of crap with people saying that "they steal our jobs" that's just stupid like. Just cause some



immigrants do better jobs than Irish people do, shouldn't be complaining and sitting on your arse and getting stuff like off the dole

Christopher - Yeah they're prepared to work harder than Irish people.

Edward - Yeah they're willing to work blue collar jobs when a lot of Irish people won't.

Lee - A lot of Irish people are prepared to stay on the dole than work in McDonalds and stuff like that.

Edward - A lot of them get a lot of stick for having better jobs than other people do. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though Lee can be seen to racialise Irishness the more implied theme in the exchange above is the coded reference to class and employment opportunities. Edward and Lee both visualise a social hierarchy that highlights Irish welfare recipients as "prepared to stay on the dole" rather than take up employment "in McDonalds and stuff like that". It is informative that Lee and Edward place the pool of migrant labour as 'blue collar' employment and not as competitors for middle class occupations. The privileges of middle class location will assumedly guarantee each person a livelihood and importantly employment opportunities outside of 'blue collar jobs'.

An important factor - already seen above with Lee, Edward and Christopher - with how young middle class people negotiate immigrants is themed around a work ethic. This was also the case for Brian in A3 School:

I work in this local restaurant and I think it's like a few of us not many of us anyway who are like born in Ireland. I hate that shit about stealing jobs or anything like that, about getting houses that's crap. People are out there working they're not here "stealing our shit". (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

For Brian co-workers can resent immigrants for being self-reliant:

I worked with this guy who was like really racist, telling all these black jokes and stuff, but like that's the worst guy I've come across [for racially abusing people].

He was just a loser, he'd hate anyone who'd like done anything for themselves.

Though there is an implied positive work ethic attached to immigrant workers it is a specific work ethic located in the poorly paid service sector. Wendy was explicit in placing immigrants into particular labour niches, placing Chinese as 'working in McDonald's [mock oriental accent] "chips chips fries fries"'. For Jenny the concentration of immigrants into lower paid service

labour niches was the result of the immigrants' backgrounds and not any structural discrimination in Irish society:

Jenny – Well that's their fault we've got our education.

Kelly – Well that's not their fault.

Sandra – They couldn't get it.

Jenny – Yeah but they could go back to school in Ireland. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though the above exchanges points at a level of economic acceptance towards immigrants it is a highly limiting acceptance determined, somewhat, by a class interest and middle class socialisation.

The lack of felt labour market competition from migrants on the part of middle class young people is understandable given the privileged socialised sense of social ownership that middle class people enjoy in Ireland. Something of this ownership can be seen in the experience of Irina T., a Russian national, who when interviewed on her immigration experience in Ireland tells how perceptions towards immigrants fixed the labour niches she was perceived to work in:

I tried to find a job in my area of expertise and applied for the post of lab technician in a school. Of course, I was overqualified but I accepted that, because after all it's a new country for me and because English is not my first language. Anyway, at the interview, one of the teachers commented, 'You know, this is a very good job. Wouldn't you be better off trying for something in McDonalds?' At that instant, I understood my future here (quoted in Knight, 2001:215-216).

How class can be perceived as a protection from economic competition can be seen in Patrick's response to a question asking about how informed he would like to be of immigrants' cultures:

No I think everyone just sees them as they're working for us, not really like part of our society. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Patrick's 'working for us' is indicative of a level of middle class projected authority that is not matched in working class attitudinal assumptions of immigrants, which appear more themed at a working *with us* or even *against us* rather than working '*for us*'. Certainly on a particular level it can be understood that working class people have a more immediate concern with economic matters than middle class young people, and this would seem to have some effect upon the negotiation of immigration. For instance from the working class sample some 40.1% (N=104)

are in employment but from the middle class sample this figure is 27.9% (N=26). It can be assumed that working class students are *now* competing with immigrant workers for employment unlike some middle class students. Considering the limited employment opportunities for working class young people, and also for some immigrants, it can be assumed that there is some overlap in the jobs young working class people and immigrants are applying for - bar or retail work for instance. However economic matters are not only seen in employment patterns but can be seen in the differing symbolic values placed in the *Celtic Tiger*. The results shows that a majority of young people sampled - 59.4% (N=202) - valued the *Celtic Tiger* as personally either a *Very Important* or an *Important* symbolic marking of Irishness but within this figure there exists a clear classed distinction where only a very slight majority of middle class students - 50.5% (N=47) - identified the *Celtic Tiger* as personally either *Very Important* or *Important* as compared to a very clear majority - 62.7% (N=155)- of young working class students who valued the *Celtic Tiger* as either *Very Important* or *Important*.

Respondents' comments on the questionnaires amply demonstrate that economic issues are more salient for working class students than for middle class students, perhaps because the former see more of a downside in the Celtic Tiger than the latter:

the way the homeless treated, there could be more money towards homeless environment than putting that Spike up (QQ82)

the price of things (QQ119)

The economy and the amount of money that people earned. It should be much more evenly distributed e.g. poor people (QQ183)

prices because there two high. Of houses, clothes, food (QQ195)

the prices of housing as inflation is far to high (QQ208)

the way the government spends our money e.g. The Spike – I think it was a waste of money (QQ233)

I would take done the Spike for a start a waste of money, and put more money into education and homelessness – tackle it, and put more money into cancer research (QQ235)

poverty would no longer be a problem we spend money on a Spike for heaven's sake when we could have been helping the people who need it (QQ246)

stop the government wasting money on spikes etc. and help the poor and the homeless on the streets (QQ266)

lower the prices, as since the euro everything has become too expensive (QQ300)

Young middle class students do not generally show a similar level of concern with economic matters as young working class people and it is young working class people who generally challenge the idea of an immigrant work ethic.

Garner labels a particular ‘Irish exceptionality’ view towards immigrants, an argument identified as:

When the Irish went to find work abroad it was different. They had no option but to work hard and didn’t get social security. Today’s immigrants are spongers (2004:161).

Garner points out that such a view places Irish emigrants in a positive light and as making an economic contribution to society, but the relationship is reversed with immigrants where they are placed as ‘spongers’. Luke linked into Garner’s ‘Irish exceptionality’ when commenting:

[Immigrants] come in poor like, do you think when the Irish went to America they only had the clothes on their back? (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Luke emphasises what might be regarded the Myth that *the Irish built America* and as Bellington *et al.* highlight such myths ‘play an important role in creating shared identities at different levels of society’ (1998:184). Economic viewpoints certainly underpin many young peoples’ negotiations towards immigrants. The devices of Othering and racialisation can be operationalised in how some people engage with the issue of immigrants where both act to re-emphasise the centrality of economic matters and importantly says something of who belongs and who does not belong in Ireland, and who can be Irish and who cannot be Irish. While Mac Gréil could highlight a ‘decrease in the intensity and degree of racialism’ between his 1972-1973 and 1988-1989 samples he could also highlight ‘a very significant level of prejudice based on physical appearance’ (1996:132), and this prejudice remains evident.

### ***9.3 No Welfare, No Blacks, No Refugees***

Many people in Ireland can recall the message and meaning carried from certain reactions towards Irish immigration into post-World War II Britain – “No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs”.

This notion is typically packed with the idea that Irish people faced discrimination in post-War Britain but overcame discrimination and made a collective and valued contribution to British society. This is the positive side of Irish emigration, and certainly the officially endorsed Irish reading. With regard to Ireland as an immigrant country there is a particular discourse which at the most extreme would suggest *No welfare, No blacks, No refugees*. This particular discourse of migration offers a precise connection between particular types of immigrants - *refugees and asylum-seekers* - and the abuse and over-extension of the social welfare system - as *refugees and asylum-seekers choose to come to Ireland to abuse the welfare system*:

There is a belief [among young people] that refugees somehow have a choice to leave their country. The pupils [in Keogh's study] are more aware of the "pull factors" into Ireland than the "push" factors from their countries of origin. The pull factors include the welfare system, the labour shortage and the "Celtic Tiger". There is general consensus that refugees are poor, which supports the view that they "choose" to come to Ireland because of the "booming economy" (Keogh, 2000:129).

Though some students do accept, Jenny for instance, that emigration is certainly not always a choice, it can be understood that most young people would seem to accept immigration as a choice. Research carried out by Curry into attitudes relating to refugees and asylum seekers shows that over half of the questionnaire respondents in Dublin - 57.3% - agreed with the statement that "Many foreigners are coming to Ireland to exploit its social welfare system" (2000:146). This finding from Curry continues to frame how some young people view *refugees* and *asylum-seekers* but more broadly immigrants; *immigrants* are placed as having greater access to welfare entitlement than Irish people but also as abusing these entitlements to social welfare.

Particular beliefs regarding immigrant access to welfare provision has garnered into 'Myths'. A Myths/Facts fact-sheet produced by Comhlamh offers six of the most popular myths surrounding immigrants in Ireland:

- [1] All immigrants are Asylum Seekers.
- [2] Ireland is taking in more than our share of refugees and asylum seekers.
- [3] We can't be expected to help others when so many of 'our own' are suffering
- [4] Refugees and asylum seekers get free prams, cars etc. from social welfare

[5] Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers cause shortages in our Healthcare and Housing

[6] Irish jobs are being taken by immigrants.

These Myths, and others, have certainly been encountered by young people. Jenny and Pauline, from A4 School, recollected witnessing zealous racial abuse that utilised the particular Myth regarding ‘Irish jobs are being taken by immigrants’:

Pauline - Me and Emma walking down the road in Ranelagh, I think it was, and this old woman just comes up to us and goes, “Them niggers them niggers” and all this crap, “They’re stealing our jobs” kind of stuff. And we’re just standing there looking at her not knowing what she was saying. “Our jobs” and all this kind of stuff.... “Chinese”... they say they’re taking over the jobs.

Jenny – This lady at the weekend... she was at a club and there was this black lady washing her hands or something or doing a job and she just went up and decked her “FU for stealing our jobs you nigger”. The lady was like in her forties, I was so upset. She went home or something. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

These incidents point to the undercurrent of economic considerations that often saturate the placement of immigrants in Ireland. Immigrants in both cases were racialised as ‘*niggers*’ who are ‘*stealing*’ Irish jobs, presumably from Irish people. The current of *No welfare, No blacks, No refugees* as held by some young people begins to be more fully seen in the following exchange:

Wendy - Every country has immigrants.

Kelly – There’s a difference between immigrants and refugees.

Emma – Cause the asylum-seekers or something they can’t get jobs until they’re here.

Kelly – They don’t want jobs [it’s] the dole [they want].

Jenny – Make them work cause that’s really bad they can’t work. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Clearly Kelly draws a distinction between ‘immigrants and refugees’ but then draws no distinction between Emma’s ‘asylum-seekers or something’ - the something is presumably refugees - who do not want employment in Ireland but rather ‘the dole’. From this group at A4 School there was an ability to segment immigrant groups. Pauline distinguished what she felt the discriminations towards immigrants may be based upon - ‘I think its more like refugees that

people are racist against' - with Wendy willingly accepting the label of 'racist' for her position on the *illegality* of refugees being in Ireland:

Wendy - Then I'm racist against refugees they're here like illegally.

Jenny - Are you racist against black people?

Wendy - No

Jenny - Are you racist against Chinese?

Wendy - No

Jenny - Are you racist against Pakistanis?

Wendy - No just like against refugees and stuff... give me money for my baby now!

Emma - People who come in and take over. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

The above exchange between Jenny and Wendy points to a simplified construction of the Immigrant Other placed as refugee and placed as begging. Wendy placing refugees as 'here like illegally' shows a generalised blanketing of a group of immigrants - refugees - that have had their asylum applications accepted and are in Ireland completely legally - as illegitimately in Ireland. A pressing problem for Wendy is how do you distinguish a *refugee* considering the varied global nature of this group in Ireland? Is the discrimination directed at Romanians only, as was implied by Jenny in this group, or is it something more? No doubt when Wendy uses the term refugee she also implies asylum-seeker, and given that a particular discourse surrounding immigration can exist - *No Welfare, No Blacks, No Refugees* - it can be assumed that Wendy believes that any refugee or asylum-seeker receiving social welfare can be placed as 'here like illegally'.

A person from A2 School might find Wendy's view limiting:

We the Irish tend to be hypocritical, our hypocritically behaviour has been highlighted with our current refugee problem. The Irish tend to be small minded and oblivious (QQ20).

Though it is debatable what the student is referring to with 'our current refugee problem' she does highlight how the issue of refugees feeds into a hypocritical behaviour, for instance there is immeasurably more Irish people who have emigrated from Ireland than people who have arrived in Ireland as refugees or migrant workers. Members from C1 School, a female working class group situated in the north inner city environs, like students in A4 School above, might fit in with what the student in A2 School considers 'small minded'.

This C1 School group demonstrated a racialising framework towards people:

Edith – Well them Romanians and blacks, I hate to see them begging, and they have their kids with them... I'm not racist right but them Romanians and Pakis [some reactions from some group members]; that's what they are like! They should be doing other things.

Deborah – How is it you never see the blacks without kids? It's like they always have kids.

Cathy – I hate it right when you see like a Chinese with a laptop and behind them is like an Irish person begging that's not right. We should be taking care of our own not giving things to the immigrants.

Kitty – They're building a new estate round our way and like the houses are for the blacks and stuff and there's lots of people looking for houses but they'll get them first. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

These comments point towards articulating the *No welfare, No blacks, No refugees* approach. The placement of particular people seems fixed for some of these young people; blacks always have children and beg as do Romanians, a theme also touched upon in A4 School; *Chinese* who may look successful are going beyond their structural limits when there are Irish homeless people, and new houses are for 'blacks and stuff'.

Immigrants can certainly stand accused, for some young people, of a particular form of social opportunism. Curry's research showed that a majority of people - 55.4% - disagree with the statement that "The majority of immigrants coming to this country are genuine political refugees" and some 16% "Neither Agreed or Disagreed" (2000:147). Though Curry's research is themed at the attitudes people living in Dublin have toward refugees and asylum seekers it is indicative that a spillage has occurred between different immigrant groupings, like possibly students or workers; the 'Chinese with a laptop' for example. Deborah, when asked later in the focus group about having to be born in Ireland to be Irish, felt:

Don't know but that's what the immigrants are about isn't it? They're not Irish but then they have kids over here and its, "I'm Irish I'm Irish". (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Situating all immigrants as announcing "I'm Irish I'm Irish" certainly denies the multiculturalism of any immigrant groupings and the Diasporic experience. An Irish born person in A2 School



with French and English grandparents, who is a citizen of France and described herself as ‘not fully Irish’ (QQ14), seems very confident about her own self and collective identity. Similarly a student from C3 School who was born in England to parents from Vietnam, and who did not comment on Irishness instead placing a question mark on the comment section, wrote about what he would change about Irish society seems to understand himself as someone other than Irish:

Racism because I’m Chinese and I know how it’s like to be a different culture (QQ49).

For Treasa Galvin ‘the indiscriminate use of the terms *refugee*, *asylum-seeker* and *illegal immigrant* categorises those seeking refuge as a homogeneous group’ (2000:206). Though Galvin’s attention is on asylum-seekers, it is undoubtedly true that her observations could extend and apply to immigrants in general:

categorisation de-emphasises push factors and the heterogeneity of the refugee population, it serves to obscure the uniqueness of the individual’s past, most especially the individual causes of flight and exile’ (ibid).

Deborah’s homogenisation of immigrants quite obviously removes any ‘uniqueness of the individual’s past’ and ignores very different reasons for actually being in Ireland. Deborah seems quite dismissive of immigrant claims to *being Irish* and of any Irish acculturation by suggesting that immigrants have a permanent past identity of Other - ‘They’re not Irish’ - that could not be over-ridden by any adoption of Irish self-identity on the part of immigrants, which is simply based upon a legal foundation of parenthood. A student in B1 School would seem to dispute this in writing about their sense of Irishness:

We are just Irish and we have distinctive ways of going. Many people of different races living in Ireland may have a certain amount of Irishness in them after living [here]. I’m not really sure what Irishness is (QQ192).

Though this person was unsure of what Irishness may mean they could obviously extend its conceptualisation outwards to other people not necessarily born in Ireland. The opposite is the case of Kitty who limits Irishness and reinforced her belief in the opportunism of immigrants by highlighting an example from her experience:

That happened with Jane having a kid, and your man [an immigrant] is like “I’m with my kid I’m Irish”. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

This reading of “‘I’m with my kid I’m Irish’” positions immigrants as having an erratic identity and essentially dismisses immigrants as offering any positive multicultural contribution to Irish society and would seem to place any children of immigrants as, at best ambiguously Irish. Though some young people at A4 and C1 Schools expressed racialising views towards immigrants it was a group in B2 School - located in an established, but rapidly growing part of north county Dublin - who were even more explicitly pronounced in holding a *No welfare, No blacks, No refugees* position.

Of all the schools that participated in this research - at either quantitative or qualitative level - this multi-denominational working class school had the most multicultural student body. The school is located in an area of high immigration and a significant proportion of the student body was from an immigrant background<sup>9</sup>. One of the opening questions to this group was related to how group members may spend their leisure time. Luke replied that:

There’s nothing out here – no cinema no McDonald’s nothing to do. It’s small...  
no nothing [to do]. Talk of building things but there’s nothing and its growing!

Liam – Growing in blacks.

Luke – Yeah for sure. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Fredrickson identifies racism when:

differences that might otherwise be considered ethnocultural are regarded as innate, indelible, and unchangeable that a racist attitude or ideology can be said to exist. It finds its clearest expression when the kind of ethnic differences that are firmly rooted in language, customs, and kinship are overridden in the name of an imagined collectivity based on pigmentation, as in white supremacy, or on a linguistically based myth of remote descent from a superior race (2002, 5-6).

Liam’s immediate consciousness - following Luke’s line of comment - related negatively to identifying the growth of the immigrant population - ‘blacks’ - as the only thing happening in the area. Liam proved particularly inclined to codify people and behaviour through racialisation that fits into Fredrickson’s understanding of racism. Another working class male student from C4 School wrote that if he had the power to change Irish society he would have ‘Less colours’, then went on to encapsulate Irishness as, ‘I want less colours and cultures in Ireland’ (QQ92). This

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<sup>9</sup> The teacher who arranged the focus groups offered an approximation that 30-40% of the student body may either not have been born in Ireland or who’s parents may not have been born in Ireland.

statement indicates this student holds a strong racial framework. Indeed some racial framework appears to extend out to many young people. Ray, from A1 School, in speaking about a reaction from one of the under-9 soccer players he coaches, implied an evident racial framework exists for many young people:

Ray - There's a bit of a shock now as a lot of foreign people are coming into the country. And like there was one black playing against my under 9's on Sunday and the guys were afraid to mark him because he was black.

Tom - That's a bit harsh though.

Ray - Yeah and I was telling them there's nothing wrong with him. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Certainly for the students in one of the focus group in B2 School a particular mark of tension was colour - which was very much absent from the comments and consciousness of the other focus groups' carried out in the school. The identification of immigrants and colour were terms that were often used interchangeably to generally signify something or someone as different, socially distanced, and non-Irish and therefore not *legitimately* entitled to the same social protection, or indeed, belonging-ness to Irish identity.

The group at B2 School were asked their feelings towards possible distinctions in national identity in Dublin City and their own suburban area, and though Luke addressed the question, and could visualise a cultural difference based around how tradition was respected in his locality compared to the larger city environment, Liam followed Luke's comments by continuing the 'Growing in blacks' theme by stating geographical identity differences based around 'More foreigners' in the place he lived as compared to the city. Garner has written how 'the racialisation of Ireland has been to underscore the line in the imaginary between national and non-national based on somatic difference' (2004:155). Certainly some young peoples' negotiation of immigrants follows Garner's observation directly. Though it may seem highly extraordinary that one question asking about how people spend their leisure time and another question themed at urban identity differences would directly lead to an immediate offering of racial comments, it is indicative of Liam's resentment towards the Other that he reacted as he did. It is more than evident that for Liam the presence of 'blacks' and/or 'foreigners' is foregrounded in his consciousness when asked to participate in a focus group designed to address the topic of *Irishness for young people*.

What came through from this group generally was their unrestrained willingness to talk openly about their views even though the issue of articulating racialising views remains a taboo area of formal Irish discourse. This group had its own particular dynamic which, when compared to the other focus group conducted in the school - which was younger and had both sexes – shows them to actively Other immigrants. The active delineation of people is closely themed around the *No Welfare, No Blacks, No Refugees* justification:

Liam – Well they're building new estates but it's for the immigrants.

Luke – Two new ones - Bridge and Westlands Estate - and it will all be for immigrants. They get everything - houses and cars – that's not right. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Immigrants, not simply for Liam but for *all* participants in this focus group, were placed as in some way benefiting from social policy to the disadvantage of Irish people. It is clear that Luke and Liam each accepted the Housing Myth, with Luke also endorsing the Cars Myth as well. Even though it was offered to this group that 'Immigrants are here to stay', Luke, while accepting this continued to draw a negative association between immigrants and welfare, "Yeah ok but they go to the welfare and they work". Connor immediately legitimised Luke's view, 'Yeah its grand when they're working but doing that [claiming welfare entitlements] that's not right'. What appears firmly established in this group's internal dynamic is that challenges against their dominant association of immigrants with welfare are resisted and immigrant reliance on welfare dependency/abuse is constantly reinforced. Connor, for instance, has no issue with the coupling of being black and being Irish particularly when Paul McGrath was employed as an example - "Yeah that's fine that's not a problem" - but what was a consistent problem for Connor was that:

These immigrants are getting cars, you know going to the social welfare and working, we not taking care of our own people. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

When Connor was asked if he thought 'taking care of our own people' was important, he explicitly linked particular deprivation against the economic demands of immigrants, 'Yeah when you have homeless and stuff'. It can be seen that some people in this group could operationalise a view that privileges Irish people against non-Irish people in accessing social provisions. This instancing of the homeless implies some form of national connectedness and

solidarity existing in Connor's consciousness in supporting Irish homeless people against supporting the accommodation needs of non-Irish people.

The Housing Myth acts as the central driving Myth employed to legitimise racialised views and offer some fixity upon the Immigrant Other for some young people. The Immigrant Other can here unite and reinforce Irishness into some sense of collective responsibility towards other Irish people. The visibility of Irish homeless people, especially given the dramatic increase and presence of wealth over the past 10 years, works to profoundly establish and collectively legitimise the *No Welfare, No Blacks, No Refugees* attitude. Garner feels that:

Calls for restrictions on asylum (because it costs so much) are framed in the same breath as calls for more deserving use of funds, such as dealing with homelessness. This symbolic hierarchy places the most disempowered group of insiders in Irish society, without even an address, and not through choice, in direct competition with non-nationals (2004:174).

The issue of homelessness and housing is connected to the illegitimate demands of immigrants and this coupling receives frequent comment from young working class people:

I would change the way refugees get treated better and given houses faster than Irish people. Put our native people first (QQ97).

Within a cluster of students from C7 School the following comments were offered as things they would individually change about Irish society:

look after all the Irish homeless people and give them flats and houses firstly instead of black people and I'm not a racist (QQ313).

less immigrants cause they get all the houses while Irish people are trying to get houses (QQ316).

Irish government should deal with our homeless before giving coloured people a job and a gaff (QQ317).

Irish government should look after our sick, poor homeless people before they start letting other people into the country and start giving them houses and jobs (QQ318).

Particular Myths are quite evident within this cluster as well as a *new* myth; that immigrants are not simply taking Irish jobs but are preferentially offered employment. Obviously three students - QQ316, QQ317 and QQ318 - reinforced the others' views with all the responses above

showing the construction of ‘immigrants’ as universal competitors for housing entitlements. The first comment is directed at ‘look[ing] after all the Irish’ before starting to house immigrants and the second comment is a subtler reference to ‘less’, as against ‘no’ immigrants who ‘get all the houses’ which is the position of the third and fourth respondent. It is noteworthy that only one person from this cluster - QQ313 - supported the teaching of different cultures in their school which compares markedly to the 61.4% (N=78) of their respective cohort - working class females - who favour it. However more indicative of a position of discrimination towards immigrants in general is that three of these four students - QQ313, QQ317 and QQ318 - indicated they would avoid forming friendships with people from ethnic minority backgrounds. To put this in context only seven people of the entire one hundred and twenty-eight working class female students sampled indicated they would be reluctant to form friendships with people from ethnic minorities; it can be seen therefore how strong the current of discrimination was within this particular cluster of students.

The Housing Myth seems firmly embedded with some young people despite the fact that no immigrant grouping receives preferential housing treatment. McCrone points out that:

Myths do not disappear when they are confronted with facts... for they operate on a quite different plane... myths validate experience and action independently of their truth-status (1992:20).

That immigrants are housed is seemingly enough to justify this continuing myth of housing preference for some young people. However a comment from a student at B1 School, who felt that they would not ‘be able to live here because I won’t be able to afford a house here’ (QQ261), emphasises how this Myth can be challenged. This person did not blame Immigrants and when asked what social change they would make to Ireland the student wrote:

I’d change people attitudes to people of a different race, religion etc. I am really anti-racism. I’d lower house prices and get rid of college fees. I am an Irish person and I feel I won’t be able to live here when I’m older because I won’t be able to afford it.

Though this student is something of an exception - in being expressly anti-racist - it does highlight how uneven the understanding of immigrant demands upon housing provision can be.

## ***9.4 Addressing Difference***

Though racialisation can be themed around ‘black’ it was show above that it can include refugee and asylum-seekers, and indeed can also be extended to all immigrants in Connor’s assessment:

You’re asking what it is to be Irish? Well it will be all diluted away with the foreigners. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Connor could accept economic migrants but obviously a commitment implying cultural respect for other cultures is rejected. For Connor, in B2 School, immigrants then offer the threat of completely undermining Irishness, with the ‘diluted away’ implying an essence of identity that is more purified without the presence of ‘foreigners’. Such a view of potential Irish cultural extinction was also expressed within A3 School by Jill who, while accepting the social presence of immigrants, articulated an argument for immigration restriction around the potential preservation of Irish culture:

[Immigration] its good but cause we’re so small if it keeps happening for years and years we could lose what it is to be Irish. Like with America, they wouldn’t have as much of a culture as we would it’s because there are so many different nationalities and stuff. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Though immigration is ‘good’ too much could cause the Irish to ‘lose what it is to be Irish’. America can be seen as placed as a land of heterogeneous immigrants with ‘different nationalities’ and so is not necessarily sharing specific national particularities - while Ireland is implied as something akin to a homogeneous sociality. A similar concern with limiting immigration is also a view evident in the A4 group:

Wendy - We should take them [immigrants] in like small quantities. Shouldn’t have so many people coming over like in a year overrunning the country.

Emma – Too many people.

Wendy - Yeah. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Wendy’s suggestion of ‘overrunning’ is suggestive of a discourse that places Ireland as endangered by immigrants. This concern with immigration connects to a concern with preserving Irish culture. Keogh’s research into how young people living in Dublin construct and view refugees and asylum seekers quotes a young boy as saying:

You’re all gonna bring your identity with you, like there’s too many of all different races in a country, you run the risk of losing it like (2000:130).

Keogh points out how this young person ‘sees culture and identity as static and essential entities’ and how they ‘confuse culture and race’ (ibid). Jill and Connor’s comments also fix Irishness and point to a fear of cultural loss that resounds with O’Connell’s observation of the social undercurrent ‘that the cost of modernisation and economic success and a hegemonic bland liberal consensus is the loss of [Irish] identity and character, and a sense of who we [Irish] are’ (2001:7). Some of ‘*who we are*’ is understood in the conceptualisation of Dublin, and Ireland’s, geographical smallness which, for some young people, implies a limit on the cultural coping capacity of Ireland to deal with immigrants ‘overrunning the country’.

Immigrants do not simply open up Ireland and Irish perceptions to the global perspective but immigrants also re-emphasise the local and social compactness of Ireland itself. Irish identity can be operationalised as immediately experienced and distinctively different from other national identities, like multinational heterogeneous America, but also fragile and potentially requiring protection from non-Irish cultural saturation. This can be clearly seen with how some young people responded to the idea of a Chinatown in Dublin where Tony responded to the suggestion of a Dublin Chinatown with, “You couldn’t have a Chinatown in such a small city or a country”. This notion of smallness permitting connectedness seems to be a characteristic of Irish identity embraced by some students in A1 School when asked about multiculturalism:

Martin - A lot of like different cultures? There not all one?

Tom - We’re all the same in Ireland aren’t we?... I suppose in a way we’re all kind of like one person. Say if you went to a match or something everyone would be exact same, they’d usually be in their big green and white, faces painted stuff, everyone in Ireland has kinda the same culture in a way he is right.

Rory - Its just one country there isn’t that much of a chance for big differences between people to be different. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Tony from A1 School group felt that:

It’s a much more friendly atmosphere in Ireland so small you seem to know everyone not know everyone but seems like you have a sense of homeliness.

Tom - You’d know everyone in a way, you’d say hiya to anyone. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Also from A1 School but another group, Paul emphasised the smallness of Dublin:



The city is still small in comparison to other cities. You can get out of Dublin City in 10 minutes it's not like far away. It's easy to get to the countryside and all, its not far. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though for some young people the '*who we are*' is connected to a geographical size, there is evidently a conforming mono-sociality of Irishness constructed around being unequivocally Irish and *knowing your place*. Surely, for instance, a Chinatown in Dublin is connected to the size of the Chinese population in Dublin not the size of the City. This same argument on smallness could also apply to other Diasporic identities - English, Italian, Nigerian, Russian etc. Suggesting that it is the size of the Diasporic groups that determines if pockets of the city could be appropriated and employed as Diasporic expressions which overlooks the willingness of Irish society, and some young people, to recognise cultural differences. It will be recalled from the A4 group above that Emma extends a social discrimination to 'People who come in and take over'. The visibility of a Chinatown in Dublin seems to imply a taking over of urban space by an immigrant group. Emma employs a conformist and structured approach to difference - Irish society is patterned with an understanding of compliance.

The issue of control and taking over was also touched upon by Paul in A1 School. Though Paul placed himself as essentially tolerant and accepting of cultural difference, he seemed to highlight a personal discomfort with how certain areas of the city have been populated by (presumed) immigrants:

If you go up Sheriff Street Gardener Street now its all basketball courts on the left hand side and you always see people who are not natively Irish always on there playing around like but its like turned into a completely minority area like there's barely any Irish people living there anymore and that was like part of the old inner city part of Dublin. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Alan, also from this group, highlighted how 'Moore Street is real like that you'll never find an Irish person on Moore Street'. Garner points out that 'recent demographic shifts mean that other people's diasporas have now extended to encompass Ireland' (2004:158). It was suggested in the introduction how the north-inner City has a more visible concentration of various ethnicities - Africans and Chinese for instance - than more suburban areas of the City, and the Diaspora expressions would certainly seem to affect Paul's attitude. It is not only Paul or indeed Emma who may feel the threatening presence of cultural difference, as some themes within

Americanisation demonstrate. Mary Hickman has written of how racism can underpin the national with a 'biological essence' when 'the nation provides racism with a culturalist rationale' (1995:21). Liam showed that a 'cultural rationale' of non-Americanisation underlines racist notions:

Yeah the blacks go on like they're American – even try and do some accent! They think they're in America... it's not America you know? (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Immigrants or difference is not universally rejected; it is rather that particular Immigrants and certain types of cultural differences are acceptable and some are not. Immigrants can seem somewhat accepted by some students once they do not attempt to go beyond a given structural level; perhaps moving from being employee to employers or appropriating urban spaces - 'and take over' what is not, presumably, theirs.

Offered above was a positioning of racism as understood by George Fredrickson. For Fredrickson, his conceptualisation of racism is in two related parts:

*difference* and *power*. It originates from a mindset that regards "them" as different from "us" in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the ethnoracial Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group (2002:9).

The operationalisation of differences - based upon colour and/or culture - was pronounced in B2 School, as was its connection to power (3). Asked about the extent of multiculturalism in Dublin, Ryan seemed accepting that 'there's different cultures' in Dublin but Liam rejected this saying:

I don't like it. It should be one culture or something; blacks seem to have it different. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

This notion of 'blacks seem to have it different' was actually repeated as a seemingly anti-racist questionnaire comment. A student from the C8 School wrote that she would change 'prejudice' in Irish society if she had the power, and explaining her position the student wrote:

how black people and other cultures get away with things easier. We're all equal eg on Parnell Street there is a club with "no white" written on the door. If this was the other way around we wouldn't get away with it (QQ 310).

Though, of course, some clubs may have a majority - or totality - of black members it remains as illegal for black people to discriminate against white people as it does for white people to discriminate against black people, but what the above questionnaire comments highlight is how whiteness - though 'equal' - is felt to be discriminated against in favour of 'black people and other cultures'. This feeling of discrimination, based upon black 'innate, indelible, and unchangeable' values, can be seen as impacting strongly upon some of the young peoples' attitudes in B2 School.

For the group that openly talked within a racialising current there was a shared sense of the shifting of power within the localised site of their school - away from white to Othered students. Fellow black students were perceived as a presence that may challenge and confront the behavioural environment of the school's social norms. Liam states:

Some [Black students] are racists as well they think they own the fucking school.

Jo – Own the school?

Liam – [Aggressive] Yeah you know walking around like they fucking own it.  
(Interview conducted Spring 2005).

The issue of school behavioural boundaries was viewed as drawn far more flexible for black students than for white students:

Luke – The blacks get away with murder in this school. Yesterday one of the black kids threw something at the teacher and nothing happened. If we did that there'd be trouble. Two standards here - everyone's afraid of being done for racism.

Liam – They're always slagging each other. 'Black cunt' they call each other, 'Nigger' as well.

Luke – One of the African kids was slagging off our accents the other day but if you started doing this African accent they'd be like, "You're a racist". And with fights! A white person will fight a white person but then when it's white and black it turns into a racist thing.

Liam – They're as bad as us for racism. Three black guys jumped this white guy and it was racist and nothing done - it's all one way. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Given the School's Mission statement of supporting an 'atmosphere of mutual respect' there should be a concern from teachers, and students, that one would be categorised as racist, however the 'atmosphere of mutual respect' would seem to be certainly perceived as lacking between black and white students. It can be seen that the group explicitly locate issues of racism within black as well as white student's attitudes so naturalising and legitimising any feeling of intolerance as *they* - the Black Other - behave like this too. It can be seen that Luke operationalised a view that black students hold an 'innate, indelible, and unchangeable' position towards *race* whereby it is fore-fronted in black students' consciousness going on to claim that fights between black and white students, while an individual matter for Luke, are turned into a race matter by black students.

This racialisation of blacks was also touched upon by Deirdre, in C1 School. Deirdre talked about the distinction between 'blacks' and white Irish males:

Like blacks right, most Irish fellas are like with someone and the blacks well like forty percent are [with someone] but the rest are players [attitudinally non-monogamous, flashy and confident]. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Deirdre does not completely racialise - obviously accepting some individuality in particular contexts as it is not all 'blacks' or all 'Irish' - she does though point to a view that 'blacks' are generally 'players'. Retelling Deirdre's considered difference between white and black males, the majority of 'blacks' being 'players', provoked the following response from the B2 School group:

Liam - They think they are!

Joseph - Like around here you don't get white and black going out. Blacks go out with blacks.

Luke - Well Dave [black male] goes out with Ciara [white female].

Liam - She's a dog I wouldn't touch her!

Ryan - Don't think many would go out with someone after they've been with a black guy.

Jo - Why?

Ryan - Just wouldn't.

Jo - But you must have black mates?

Luke - Yeah but that's different. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Joseph is most probably under exaggerating the contact between black and white students it is indicative of a 'permanent and unbridgeable' racialised approach that Ryan feels that, 'Don't think many would go out with someone after they've been with a black guy'. Though all members of the group, with the exception of Liam, accepted they had friends who are black there is a tension present between racialising and individualising people. This is seen in Luke's description of a robbery that happened to someone he knew; 'Dave was robbed by blacks but you can't trust your own either'. Clearly Luke can individualise 'trust[ing] your own', knowing when and when not to trust, and having a black friend who may be with a white person as 'that's different', but he can blatantly racialise to reinforce difference:

Remember this black family moved into Roachford and they were really friendly with the neighbours and like the neighbours went on holiday and asked the blacks to look after the house and they robbed it when they were on holidays. Everything taken and they just fucked off! (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Elisa Joy White has written that:

Irish people have a relationship with 'Blackness' that may explain the confusion, contradiction, and equivocation that materialises in discussions and media about immigrants and immigration (2002:111).

Though, rather obviously, not all immigrants are black, blackness is a marking, as with whiteness, of difference that can be both fused and separated within the B2 School group. Liam was the only member of the group who consistently maintained an anti-black stance while other group members could demonstrate 'confusion, contradiction, and equivocation'. Luke's Othering, for instance, is often fused and difficult to disentangle. Though Luke completely engaged in racialising immigrants, he showed sympathy towards immigrants, particularly their preparedness to work, and he was also personally against deportations feeling 'that's not right you know you can feel bad'. The positive economic view directed at migrants is encapsulated in Luke's view that immigrants *should* be working and not claiming social welfare. This *should* from Luke is translated into an *is* with many middle class students who willingly place immigrants as positive contributors to the Irish economy. Though all group members may have supported at times a view of *No Welfare, No Blacks, No Refugees* some could position immigrants as contributing to Irish society, through work, but the association around *No Welfare* was consistently fore-fronted in their consciousness.

White feels that Irish perceptions of blackness are strongly shaped by:

The legacy of charitable association with Africa and the perception that Black individuals are no more than the collective embodiment of the malnourished child... It becomes abruptly apparent that while it may be all right to save Africans from starvation or, in the case of the anti-apartheid movement in Ireland, oppressive socio-political systems, such a relationship only exists as long as Africans remain beyond the contours of the Irish border (2002:112).

It is difficult to maintain that the 'legacy of charitable association', the 'malnourished child' or the 'oppressive socio-political systems' are as determining upon young people as perhaps they were upon their parents or grandparents but certainly the marking of blackness was evident through Americanisation, or through musical preference. A relationship to blackness, and indeed whiteness, seems to extend to all young people showing a relationship of discerning 'selectivity that accompanies racialised interactions and acceptance' (White, 2002:111). Luke can 'like rap but I like traditional stuff too' and Frank would 'listen to hip-hop but I wouldn't just listen to American hip-hop I like British [hip-hop]'.

Though the above may point at an overall negative engagement with immigration this is certainly not the case. For some young people immigration can act positively against mono-sociality, for Dana:

It's a good thing [immigration and cultural enrichment] because Ireland was so backward. Until recent times like anyone coming in would be just be like completely ignored or whatever. I mean my Da is from Mallow and the first time he saw a black man he was like in his 40s or something and it was shock-horror! So I mean if everyone stayed like and just talked to Irish people how are you going to know the world around. I think its small minded you know whatever just to stick to your own whatever, if everyone stuck to their own that's like back to the eighteenth century values I wouldn't agree with that at all. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

The mode of suggesting that immigrants' and foreigners' presence somewhat securely modernises Ireland returns to MacLachlan and O'Connell quote above that immigration is 'the sign of a new, prosperous and attractive identity' (2000:4-5). This 'sign' was also emphasised in one A4 School group:

Jane - If more people are coming in they must like Ireland for a reason. Well we must be doing something good with people coming in foreign students, family send them here - not to America or England - to learn English. So we must be doing like something good.

Ciara - We're not as primitive as some people think.

Jane - The arrival of different cultures is a good thing. Their input into Irish culture makes Ireland a better place. It's better, by giving it different values now and it improves Irish culture... yeah we're getting loads of foreign students in, loads of Japanese, Germans, Canadians, Australian, Koreans Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, Czechs, Russia.

Nora - Most of them seem happy they don't seem to be having a horrible time. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Immigration can be emphasised as a 'sign' against the 'primitive' and importantly be placed as culturally contributing to Ireland and Irishness.

Certain other young people picked up the theme of supporting multiculturalism:

racist people and the discrimination against different cultures. I would like to have more cultures and people from different countries in Ireland (QQ18).

the inacceptance of other cultures and races, the only way to grow is to expand but the Irish people want to be left alone, we always have. If we just accepted others our whole society would benefit... I think we need to regain our friendliness and open our doors. Irish people are always shown hospitality and it would be nice if we could return the favour (QQ26)

more accepting of other people from different backgrounds and races (QQ162)

Change racism and bullying as we should all get along and not be hassled for being different (QQ200).

The appreciation of difference can be somewhat tied to what Garner labels the "historical duty" anti-racist position which is based around the proposal that:

Irish people have been (and still are) immigrants elsewhere. Therefore today they should empathise, and treat others in that position with respect and welcome (Garner, 2004:159).

This “historical duty” can be apparent in some young people, and can be used to challenge anti-immigration sentiment. For instance all of the comments used relating to the Housing Myth have been from working class students but it is seen that the Housing Myth is also expressed beyond the boundaries of the working class. Sean in A3 School, expressed views towards immigrants essentially tied to the Housing Myth:

No [immigration is not necessarily a positive social feature] I don't think so. I'd rather see like, you think about Irish people who'd lived in the country all their lives who are living on the streets where someone who's just come into the country and is almost straight away given a county council home. They should be sorting out, and sort out Irish problems first before they bring in, not a burden but they overload the system almost whereas if you get the Irish sorted out then you make room to bring in people cause its a safe country to live in. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

It can be seen that Sean follows the Housing Myth as a justification for limiting and possibly discriminating against the immigrant presence. However what is a notable distinction between the working class group in B2 and C1 and the middle class group in A3 is that the groups in B2 and C1 essentially reinforced each others views while Sean's views in A3 School were immediately challenged by other members of Sean's group:

Dana - What about all the Irish living abroad?

Barry - Well people completely overreact to it [immigration]. We only had a few thousand migrants in the whole of last year but people reacted like the country was grinding to a halt because there's so many coming in! (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Clearly Dana accepts a “historical duty” as does another young people:

[Ireland should] be more open to other races and cultures as Irish people have moved all over the world (QQ160).

It is not that Irishness, as understood by young people, might not have the room to accommodate difference it is rather that the pace and instability of contemporary social change acts against immediate acceptance of immigrants:

Like in a couple of year's time we'll accept them [immigrants] into society. We just see them as people who work here. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).



Lee's positing of acceptance taking time - which can also be understood as requiring a commitment from immigrants to stay in Ireland - is also accepted from the A3 group when asked about how the future identity of an Irish born child of Chinese parents may appear:

Nell - It will take a lot longer than 10 years for him to be accepted as Irish.

Barry - If you look at England which has had immigration, high levels of immigration for a lot longer than we had, over there there's entire areas of cities which are just like for the people who are not born in England - don't have an English background like as in India or Pakistani whatever - they're sort of sectioned off from the rest of the city they're not really assimilating they live in one place and the people who's family's ancestors are born in England live in another so the same thing could end up happening here. So you don't end up with assimilation you end up with two entirely different groups. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Bauman writes how 'no attempt to assimilate, transform, acculturate, or absorb the ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and other heterogeneity and dissolve it in the homogeneous body of the nation has been thus far unconditionally successful. Melting pots were either myths or failed projects' (1990:155). The 'myths or failed projects' of contemporary multicultural England is obviously cited by Barry and other young (white) people in Dublin can understand the opportunities and challenges to national identity posed by immigration.

## 9.5 Conclusion

Keohane and Kuhling see immigration and immigrants playing a complex role within Irish identity:

we pay lip-service to the problems of inequality and social exclusion and speak of the presence of visible minorities as the bearers of our new cosmopolitanism who save us from our insularity, and whose coming here confirms our conceit that we have always been, and continue to be, friendly, welcoming and desirable community. Those same others who we see as endangering our new society, paradoxically we feel are also constitutive of it. Those same others who erode and dissolve our way of life simultaneously affirm and reproduce it (2004:158-159).

The Immigrant Other can both mark and distinguish Irishness from other identities - loosely at least - but is also, quite plainly 'constitutive' of 'our new society' for the many young people researched. Young people's attitudes towards immigrants can be placed within different, sometimes overlapping, perspectives but three particular perspectives are highlighted:

1. A national meaning
2. A classed meaning
3. A gendered meaning

There is a national frame of understanding of who belongs and who does not belong to the Irish nation. Bellington *et al.* point out that:

Identifying ourselves as belonging to a group and perceiving some as 'other' or 'outsider' has profound effects for ourselves, for the structure of society, and for those defined as others or outsiders. Many of the injustices and inequalities within societies, and the oppressive practices surrounding these, are intricately bound up with these processes (1998:173).

How we construct and interact with the Other, or Others, supports how we continuously develop our own self and collective identities (Jenkins, 2004). The conceptualisation of the Immigrant Other can act for some to underscore Irishness with a belongingness which is determined by not being an immigrant - particularly when immigrants are placed as simply welfare opportunists - but alongside an ability to be critical of immigrants there is also an underlining support for acculturation and the ability of an Irish identity to impose itself upon other people in Ireland from different cultural backgrounds. Some young people are unquestionably racist - such as the young people who want 'less colours and cultures in Ireland' - but such plainly racist views are not shared widely. Instead there is a consistent shifting ambiguity on what the Immigrant Other can say on Irishness. There is unquestionably a persistent open-ness to engage with cultural difference but there can also be some temporary closure - certainly for some young people - allowed by Othering immigrants.

The national frame can both operationalise a sense of welcoming and tolerance to immigrants - values of Irishness many young people strongly attach to their own sense of Irish identity - but can also be employed to mark immigrants as a negative Other to Irishness. There is an evident ongoing tension in how young people negotiate immigrants as affecting Irish identity. Immigrants can be both connected to the Tra-modern view of Irishness but also connected to a

destabilisation of what some young people can understand Irish identity to mean, even though this meaning always seems to be mobile. Though immigrants can be this Other to Irishness they can also quite obviously be both employed as negative and positive Others and this process generally relates to immigrants' perceived labour market contribution and to a lesser extent cultural contributions to enhancing Irishness, which connects strongly with a classed meaning often expressed towards immigrants.

Many young middle class people place immigrants as positive contributors to the Irish economy, a view sometimes challenged by working class people. Economically immigrants can be placed, for some middle class students, as an economic opportunity but for some working class students immigrants seem to be viewed as an occupational danger and certainly an added demand upon welfare provisions. This classed meaning generally affects the interplay between positive, indifferent and negative views towards immigrants. It has been seen how working class people often employed the Housing Myth to emphasise their negative views towards immigrants. Though this Myth can be shared across classes, it is notably fore-fronted in working class students' attitudes towards immigrants and it directly links to a notion of social solidarity, particularly of course with Irish homeless people. The Myth operationalises and legitimises racialisation of immigrants and validates a view towards immigrants that discriminates against their presence as anything other than completely welcoming.

Though class can be seen to affect understandings of immigrants there can also be a gendered approach towards immigrants. Though gender does not necessarily operate as consistently as class negotiations - particularly for young working class males - it would certainly seem to affect attitudes towards immigrants and can say something of how Irish identity is itself understood. A general pattern is that young females are more receptive to respecting cultural difference than young males. Regarding the symbolic association of *Multiculturalism* and Irish identity young females are generally more favourably inclined to this than young males - 57.5% (N=80) of young males consider *Multiculturalism* as either *Very Important* or *Important* while 74.8% (N=134) of young females view *Multiculturalism* as either *Very Important* or *Important*. Though class further fragments the symbolic importance of *Multiculturalism* for males - where 54.6% (N=59) of working class males, but a far higher 67.8% (N=21) of middle class females, consider *Multiculturalism* as either *Very Important* or *Important* - female students however are not necessarily divided by class. Young females seem more open to engagement

with cultural differences than set against their male counterparts. When 52.2% (N=82) of young males would like their schools to encourage the teaching of cultures other than Irish culture the figure for young females is 68.3% (N=125). It is not that young males may not be open to different cultures but it is somewhat like what Edward, from A1 School, said about the reaction in Ireland to other cultures represented by immigrants, '[We're] Just like real protective of our country'. A mode of masculinity is certainly how some students, particularly Liam, in B2 School seem to negotiate immigrants where the presence of black students seemed to be a direct challenge to Liam's masculinity.

Young females, though implicated in racialising immigrants, also show more concern about racism than young males. Young females also identified more friends from a non-Irish background and suggest less discrimination in forming friendships with people not born in Ireland or with someone from an ethnic minority than their male counterparts. Young females express both more concern for the experience of the Other and also show some preparedness to identify themselves as an Other. It might be recalled from the consideration of Americanisation that the term 'wigger' was used abusively against a student in B2 School but the term was accepted, embraced even, by one student in C1. When Edith told Deborah that 'You think you're black', Deborah did nothing to reject the categorisation but joked and talked about being a 'wigger'. Though the C1 School group saw students actively racialising immigrants it was the only group interviewed in which any student talked about going out with someone black:

Deirdre - I went out with a black fella... but my family like not very happy, see me granda he's like "them nig-nogs" and I'm like, "But granda me fella is black".  
It's like he didn't hear.

Though the relationship of boyfriend/girlfriend was frowned upon by members of B2 School it caused absolutely no concern within any of the C1 groups. Clearly there is a *gender* frame operating towards immigrants, as there is a *national* and *classed* frame that affects how young people negotiate and place Immigrants.

Through the different general frames - that can operate simultaneously, fused or separately - young people develop a loose sense of their own Irishness through the engagement with the *Immigrant Other*. Immigrants can be viewed either, or both, positive and negative but, no matter from what perspective, are generally racialised and essentially nationalised as different to Irish.

# Chapter 10

## Urban Constructions of Irishness

According to Duffy:

The image and - ultimately - myth of the West was a central motif in the Irish cultural nationalism which evolved towards the end of the nineteenth century. The West was represented as containing the soul of Ireland – in Yeats's construction, a fairyland of mist, magic and legend, a repository of Celtic consciousness (1997:67).

Duffy's 'myth of the West' can be extended outwards to apply itself to the general theme of rural values and their representations impacting upon the construction of Irish identity. An invented and idealised comprehension of rurality has had an enduring effect upon Irish identity. *Real Ireland* was firmly located in Rural Ireland which was projected as containing the essence of Irish identity and this notion of *Real Ireland* still has an influence upon identity construction.

This chapter will consider how young people, and it is particularly young middle class people, privilege the notion of rurality as constitutive of an authentic Irish identity. This privileging will be seen as focused upon an idealised construction of Rural Ireland, which is marked as radically distanced to their own social experiences in Dublin. Rural Ireland is presented to young people, as allowing for, the unmediated exchange between people and identity where conceptualisations of Rural Ireland are saturated with an understanding that Rural Ireland retains the factors of identity associated with Traditional Ireland; a strong community consciousness imbued with the values of Catholicism and promoting a sense of a Gaelic identity. Though it has been seen how contestable both Catholic identity and the Irish language are as personally marking Irishness for some young people, Rural Ireland is afforded a privileged connection to Irish identity marked by Catholic and Gaelic culture; *young people consistently*

*emphasise these factors as a fuller expression of Irish identity than the way in which Irish identity is experienced in Dublin.* Though it will be seen that most young people appear to hold very tenuous relationships towards the reality of Rural Ireland they can share and articulate an understanding that Irish identity is deeper in Rural Ireland as it is more profoundly experienced and more commonly shared than how Irish identity is felt to be experienced in Dublin. When Irish identity is granted a diversity of meaning in urban Dublin the opposite pertains to Rural Ireland, where Irish identity is uniform and shared. This obviously has the effect of emphasising a felt difference within Irish identity between urban Dublin and Rural Ireland. This not only points to a complex relationship towards Irish identity but importantly suggests that those factors associated with Traditional Ireland maintain a central place in constructing notions of Irish identity for some young people particularly when negotiating the theme of Rural Ireland.

However what will become clear throughout this chapter is that there is a prominent ambivalence towards Rural Ireland and the projected values of rurality. This process is discernible through young peoples' overwhelming advocacy of belonging to a modern Urban Ireland which is radically distanced and different from their conceptualisations of Rural Ireland. Young people are involved in a relationship towards Rural Ireland that can both emphasise rurality in Irish identification but can also underline a distance from how young people understand themselves to be members of a *Modern Ireland*, which is the Ireland virtually all young people identify with. Rural Ireland is then constructed to be something of an Other for how Irish identity is understood in Dublin. Young people may propose that features like a community consciousness or Catholicism are important in Rural Ireland but they will treat these factors as an understood Other to how they see themselves in Dublin. Young people have an interconnected relationship that privileges Rural Ireland as containing the true values of Irish identity but remove themselves from sharing in these values and place these values as an Other to who they are.

## **10.1 Privileging Rural Ireland**

The demarcation between Urban Ireland and Rural Ireland is rigidly bounded for young people. Urban Ireland is exposed to different markings of identification where Rural Ireland is socially

enclosed and more protected from modernity and so fashions a more stable and complete Irish identity:

Tom - Ireland is not typical Ireland anymore it developed more into a kind of city.

Ray - Go to Kerry for the real Ireland.

Tom - Yeah, its like Kerry you go there its [real Ireland] horse drawn carriages and the mountains, we need more of that.

Jo - What about the idea of real Ireland what does that represent?

Ray - Like see us cleaning our clothes, our clothes in the rivers and stuff.

Connor - Stone Age stuff!

Jo - Like your saying you go to Kerry and they do that?

Ray - Maybe not that far back [as Stone Age] a little further forward - tractors and stuff.

Tom - Yeah tractors that's Irish. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Rural Ireland can be presented and celebrated for the cultural reinforcement and overlapping factors of identification that help shape notions of Irish identity. Rural Ireland is projected as homogeneous and, importantly, a purified expression of Irishness set against how essentially Dublin is envisioned as impacted by various international influences. The conceptualisation of rurality can be seen as privileged in some young people's consciousness towards where it is felt that 'real' Irish identity can be found. Urban Irish identity is explicitly distinguishable from Rural Irish identity in lifestyles and social values. A particular historic reservoir of representation - 'horse drawn carriages' or 'see us cleaning our clothes... in the rivers' are important elements that sustain this groups comprehension of Rural Ireland, or for Ray *'the real Ireland'*.

Unquestionably the urban comprehensions of Rural Ireland have been a powerful imaginative force in promoting a particularised sensing of Irish identity. According to McManus:

we Irish have never really accepted that we can be both Irish and urban at the same time. If we think for a minute of the images that we have of ourselves and the ways in which we tend to project Irish culture to other people, it becomes clear that these images are couched in terms of rural nostalgia. The thatched cottages with the turf fire somehow appears more Irish than the suburban semi-detached, even though statistically we are far more likely to be living in suburbia than in a rural idyll reminiscent of de Valera's speeches (McManus, 2003:33).

Considering wider evidence from the focus groups there is certainly some suggestion that ‘the images that we have of ourselves and the ways in which we tend to project Irish culture to other people’ is infused with ‘rural nostalgia’. Writing an Introduction to his photographic collection, *The Irish Village*, Robin Morrison comments that:

There is an ease in travelling through Ireland which allows photographing the villages to be a far more pleasurable undertaking than it would be in most places. There are few of the physical problems of the more industrialized countries - crowned motorways or frustrating parking restrictions; but, more than that, the friendliness, warmth and help offered to the traveller make the going easy... The greatest pleasure of travelling in Ireland is the meeting of people, and the best place to meet people is in their villages, where life is slower and there is time to sit and talk and discover Ireland in your own way (1986:6-7).

The rural themes apparent in Morrison’s description remain perceptible in young people’s notions towards Rural Ireland; less industrialised; less commercial; more communal; ‘friendliness, warmth and help’. When asked what a person may expect when they come to Ireland, two students from A4 School identified a particular expectation that fits with Morrison’s representation:

Kelly - They do [expect rural imagery and social stereotypes] it’s like, Where do you keep the leprechaun?

Sandra - Yeah, does everyone have a cow in their back-gardens? (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Tom is explicit in connecting the tourist expectation of Irishness with the reality of contemporary Ireland:

Tom - But that is the image abroad [stereotypical rural imagery] they’re expecting green fields when they come to Ireland and they see the city and I don’t think they like that. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Sean and Dennis both highlight how a commercial representation can feed into maintaining the imagery of Rural Ireland’s fore-grounded place as *true* Ireland:

Sean - The fact as well the way tourist board like will send off ads of just say a little country pub with the lad in the corner with the bodhran and lad singing with



little wooden seats and all that just to show yeah that this is traditional Ireland.  
People come over and they see Ballymun flats

Dennis - Tourists people aren't going to put up Ballymun flats and say "Come to Ireland". (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

It can be seen from the various responses from focus groups that students do accept a level of 'rural nostalgia' evident within the tourist gaze and the urban gaze towards Ireland and Irish identity. There is certainly a privileging of the position that rural imagery can hold in the place of what others may value as Ireland. Tom highlights certain expectations of that he feels people may hold when they come to Ireland but it can be seen to feedback on his own expectations of commercialised Irishness:

there's Irish pubs everywhere [abroad]. I think that's great, really shows you yeah. It's like the Irish [themed] pubs they don't look like the Irish pubs cause they're all green and leprechauns. When you go to an Irish pub in Ireland it's just like a pub. You go to a pub in Spain it's like didleeei-didleeei-didleeei. It's great I love that. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though Tom is comfortable with how Irishness is projected in an international setting it can be seen that his *traditionalised* visualisation impacts upon his reception of *modern* symbols representing Ireland:

I hate The Spire that's not Irish... They're doing all that type of stuff to Ireland [cultural modernisation/post-modernisation] it's like well what are you doing? Put up some shamrocks or something.

Tom obviously values the representation of Ireland found within a pre-modern setting; an Irishness connected to cultural expressions - Irish music or sports - with symbolisation more fixed in representational meaning - the shamrock - than the Irishness of contemporary Dublin or with the more abstracted symbolisation of The Spire.

Young people do express a definite difference in how Dublin and Rural Ireland is experienced. Damien, from a different group in A1 School, offered a clear distinction between Urban and Rural Ireland based around friendliness:

They're much more friendly down the west though. Like in Dublin you wouldn't be as friendly as they are down the bog in Clare or something. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though the term *the bog* may sound derogatory towards projected Rural Ireland it was offered in a positive and respectful frame. It can be seen how the imagery of ‘the west’ can be employed to emphasise that a valued practice of Irish identity is more fully adhered to outside Dublin. Damien was not alone in commenting upon ‘the West’ as a valued site of Irishness. Jane expressed the belief that in ‘the west’ the Irish language prevailed as a commonly spoken language. Considering that Jane was one of the very few people involved in this research to stress the intrinsic importance of the Irish language to her sense of Irish identity it can certainly be suggested that Duffy’s ‘myth of the West’ (1997:67) still has some influence with some young people.

The rooted visualisation of *the west* and *the bog*, which essentially represents a Dublin colloquial stereotypical representation of Rural Ireland, remains a familiar conceptualisation when dealing with Rural Ireland. Michael Collins’ (1968) portrayal of nativism could still quite easily fit with some young peoples’ negotiated understanding of Rural Ireland:

It is only in the remote corners of Ireland in the South and West and North-West that any trace of the old civilization is met with now. To those places the social side of anglicisation was never able very easily to penetrate. To-day it is only in those places that any native beauty and grace in Irish life survive (1968:99).

Collins idealised view towards rurality seems shared by some young people, Tom and Ray above for instance. One group could juxtapose the practice of urban living against projected rural living to present a distinction and privileging of Rural Ireland’s connection to Irishness:

Ciara - We’re kind of more modern they’re more Irish you know? Like music, farms and stuff.

Esther - Really are true Irish [in the country].

Jean - They have ceilis for fun you know? They do have discos and they enjoy ceilis but most people here [in Dublin] would be like, “I’m not going to a ceilis!” but down there [it is different].

Mary - They speak Irish.

Jane - They go to the barn dances and all. They have got like Irish dancing, Irish music.

Ciara - More into the language, the music, the community thing.

Esther- There’s more of a community like.

Mary - Here it's more modern. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Once again it can be seen how much Rural Ireland preserves on Irish identity when compared to Dublin. The projected rural imagery and understanding of young people emphasises a shared culture for those people living in Rural Ireland against the shared understanding expressed of the fractured living in urban Ireland. The rural '*true Irish*' are distinguishable from the urban - assumedly *un-true* - Irish through their connections to living Irishness; urbanites do not generally speak Irish or attend ceilis for instance. The rural economy is noticeable in Ciara's description as is the Irish language theme apparent with both Ciara and Mary's linkage of Rural Ireland with the practice of speaking the Irish language. The placing of rurality as *exclusively* Irish speaking - and given how symbolically valued the *Irish language* was seen in symbolising Irish identity - may help explain why some views towards Rural Ireland can emphasise the sense that Rural Ireland attains a heightened level of Irishness compared to Dublin.

This theme of attributing Rural Ireland a heightened sense of Irish identity is also evident in how the other grouping from A4 School negotiated rurality:

Jo - And what about the country [any differences in Irish identity]? I'm thinking rural Ireland.

Wendy - Bogger-land.

Jenny - The meadows.

Jo - Do you think it would be *more Irish*?

Wendy - Yeah cause they're more close down the country.

Sandra - They're more Irish.

Emma - Everyone knows each other.

Wendy - More families that do Irish. They're just so much more Irish.

Jenny - When I first came to Ireland I thought the Irish people were more the people down the country, so much more Irish than the Dubliners.

Jo - In what respect though [are they more Irish]?

Jenny - The culture in Dublin is like very spread.

Sandra - And down the country they speak Irish - we hate it in school.

Emma - Everyone in Dublin just hates it.

Sandra - And down the country they just love Irish.

Jenny – Yeah like in Donegal their ways are more Irish, their clothing, no not anymore. Their houses and stuff. Dublin is more like European, a bit more uncultured Irish.

Emma - Modern. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

It can be seen how Rural Ireland is presented as holding a connection to Irishness through cultural markers often seen as rejected in an urban setting - the Gaelic language and the ubiquitous *community* for instance. Rural Ireland is connected to a specific organic mode of lived Irishness based upon different lifestyles and attitudes than those pertaining in Dublin. The ‘more Irish’ is not only evident in the projected rural adherence to the Irish language but is accepted, and elaborated upon, around the theme of cultural homogeneity, particularly for Jenny. The cultural environment of Dublin is ‘European, a bit more uncultured Irish’. While Dublin is multicultural, Rural Ireland continues to share the cultural loyalty and the cultural mission of preserving and marking explicit distinguishable factors of Irish identity. When arriving from Australia Jenny obviously carried an expectation of Ireland. Though this expectation can be met in *the country* - Donegal for example - she clearly feels that Dublin has many different alternative identity influences. Dublin is not simply *differently Irish*, but rather offers identity influences that format identity as manifestly *less Irish* than people from a projected Rural Ireland.

The projection of rurality as favourably connected to a more specific understanding of Irish identity was also a theme, perhaps surprisingly, expressed in A3 School:

Niamh – I think people [in Rural Ireland] would be a lot more [Irish], when I speak to my grandparents whatever. Like they’re a lot more into their community. They’re always talking about people like Missus so and so down the road like you know? ... I don’t know everybody on my road like I don’t! There’s definitely a closer community and stuff down the country.

Janet – Definitely more Irish and stuff down there.

Niamh – Yeah definitely.

Jo – In what context would they be more Irish?

Niamh – In the way, the whole, in everything really. The whole speaking Irish you know? That’s pretty much in your face a lot. The whole religion thing. The whole very very Catholic, you know the whole Irish Catholic kind of thing?

That's very big down the country. I find myself when I go down, I've a lot of relations in Galway, and I'd be and I go down and you'd be more involved in the GAA kind of thing. And you'd become more competitive in that than up here and you do and the pub thing is more down there you get away with it more down there like you could go to the pub every night in Dublin. As an older person I don't know it doesn't seem as bad down the country its more a community thing down the country its ok like you know everyone is joining up together like... at mass and the pub

Janet – Yeah at mass and at the pub its ok, very Christian like you know, but up here it's so busy I don't know, the fields and stuff. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Niamh and Janet, like many other middle class people, both place a definite identity difference between Urban and Rural Ireland. Importantly both Janet and Niamh feel their conceptualisations of rurality are created and reinforced by their engagements with rural communities in Ireland, and not through simply a fictive or mediated relationship, which obviously may affect some people's negotiations of Rural Ireland. Even though both Niamh and Janet show a reflexive ability to thoroughly question Irish identity it can be seen that each place a value in Rural Ireland as expressing something deeper about Irish identity than how Irish identity may be experienced in Dublin. Both can see how Catholicism is an important factor of identity in rural Ireland - though it seems to mean very little in Dublin - and Niamh highlights how specific cultural themes within Irish identity, the language once again but also the GAA, are important to people in Rural Ireland. Also obvious in distinguishing the rural from the urban is the theme that Rural Ireland is imbued with a sharp sense of community consciousness. This sense of community in Rural Ireland can influence and shape understandings of contemporary Irish identity for the young people involved in this research.

## **10.2 Urban understandings of community, identity and belonging**

Raymond Williams in discussing *Community* noted that it implied 'a sense of common identity and characteristics' (1976:65). Young people do understand that at different times, at particular

moments, 'a sense of common identity and characteristics' can envelope their identity either partially or as a complete feature - though they may not attribute their belonging as comparable to the power implied by a rural community belonging. A young person in Dublin can seem to comprehend their membership of a multiplicity of different community identities at both the same and at different times but they do not associate, or articulate, their personal membership through the notion of community. For instance Tom identified different communities of friendship within A1 School - some people he liked and disliked - but he was prepared to fight along-side someone he disliked from his school against 'someone from another school' if required to maintain the honour of the School. Obviously for Tom we can see that a school community can over-ride his own friendships community within the school but Tom never articulated any of these networks as a type of community, though fighting along side someone to uphold the honour of the school certainly suggests some 'sense of common identity'.

McManus points out 'that there is a sense of community in almost every urban area, but that it takes shape and is played out in different ways than in a rural place.' (2003:34). Furthermore:

People are not necessarily bound together because of where they live, as in a rural locale, but through other aspects of their lives; perhaps because of a common interest, place of work, leisure time activity, and so on. Community may thus arise more naturally, as a result of common bonds, and it may be possible for people to belong simultaneously to several overlapping communities that reflect the various aspects of their lived experience (ibid).

What, however, applies to the individual urban identity - membership of different, sometimes overlapping, sometimes separable communities - seems absent when applied to how the rural community is imagined by young people as essentially pervasive and commonly shared. This is an important feature in how young people understand their identity in Dublin and how this has some effect upon understanding certain projections of Irish identity.

Bauman has written how in contemporary societies where the state is being decoupled from national identity the notion of community can become a very important marking of identity:

To insecure people, perplexed, confused and frightened by the instability and contingency of the world they inhabit, 'community' appears to be a tempting

alternative. It is a sweet dream, a vision of heaven: of tranquillity, bodily safety and spiritual peace (2004:61).

The overlapping *community* of identity - as against urban *communities of identities* - seems *only* established and fixed within Rural Ireland. When Urban Ireland has a number of alternative plural communities of identification which one can belong to - school, class, gender, religion, sporting - Rural Ireland is, for many young people, constructed as a singular unified identification that overlaps and reinforces a sensing of a stable, consistent and protective sense of community which offers very fixed notions of the shape of Irish identity, at least as it is suggested to be understood in Rural Ireland. When young people allow themselves some selectivity with which communities or features of Irish identity they may pick and identify with the option of choice is not conferred upon a monolithic and essentially inflexibly pictured Rural Ireland. Young people's encompassing portrait of Rural and Urban Ireland's identi-scape fixes the rural community as one shared evenly by people who live in Rural Ireland, as has been seen above in how some young people suggest that in Rural Ireland the Irish language is a commonly spoken language.

Young people can imbue and fix the particularity of the rural community which seems to leave little space for individuality but rather suggests that social relations are determined through a willing conformity to community behaviour and lifestyle. The rural community promotes particular cultural markers associated with Irish identity - Catholicism, the Irish language or Gaelic sport - and the community retains an ability to format and fundamentally shape understandings of Irish identity. The rural community is socially enclosed and personal, where in Tom words, 'everyone knows everyone'. Tom highlights what Ruth McManus suggests is the general Irish perception about the rural-urban dichotomy, that:

"Down the country" everybody knows your name, your business, where your forbears are buried. They may know more about you than you might know about yourself (2003:33).

This was also a theme highlighted by Jane:

Everyone knows everyone. Secrets can't be kept and all. It's real gossip. You cannot keep something quite it's spread around. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

When rurality is laced with personal intimacy, in Dublin, as pictured by many of these young people, there is an exhibited sense of a lack of “community” and a sense of belonging’ (ibid):

Esther - They’re more of a community [in the country] like. In Dublin...In my estate I wouldn’t know anyone but my granny and granda they live in Leitrim like when they’re in town they know everyone, know nearly everyone. Closer community... say like in where I live you don’t know everyone but say somewhere like Leitrim you know everyone.

Mary - It’s so much smaller. There’s small businesses and stuff.

Jean - And there’s more people moving to and fro [in Dublin] and there are more houses to rent like my next door neighbour the place is split into six rooms for students or something. Like they moved new students, moving in every couple of months, so you couldn’t, know them all the time.

Jane - There its like, “How’s it going?” but here in Dublin you don’t know everyone that’s on the street.

Jean - They’re more inclined to keep in contact. In Dublin you might see ten different people each day and you talk to them and there’s no “Give me your address and I’ll write to you”. And I was down in Kerry for a few days and three people wanted to write to me and there’s nothing of that here. You know it’s not like that. You make friends quicker down there and inclined to keep [in touch].

(Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Rurality is obviously imbued with a sensing of a community consciousness and friendship which is felt to be markedly absent, for some of these young people, in the areas of Dublin they live in. Dublin has a fluidity of memberships - ‘more people moving to and fro’ - that acts against establishing the same social stability as projected upon Rural Ireland. Though what is absent is the realisation that in Dublin young people do stay in touch - by phoning, texting, msn and Bebo messaging and emailing - it is important that the perception of Rural Ireland is one where people and identity are powerfully interconnected. Rurality is privileged as more intimate with a stable and unbroken social backdrop - ‘It’s so much smaller’ and ‘people are more inclined to keep in contact’.



These feelings towards the rural community have a direct effect upon some young people in understanding their identity in Dublin. The rural is typically visualised as non-threatening and welcoming when the reality of Dublin, certainly for some young people, is one of suspicion:

Eamon - We can't walk through the park without fear of being mugged. Yeah like loads of people have been [mugged] last year.

Rory - The amount of phones that have been stolen in Castlewell Park just last year alone. Sure I was mugged in second year. Like you can't walk home from school without being [under threat].

Tom - I live in Killiney and that's like, I've been mugged four times only been living here [In Dublin] three years. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

From the questionnaire analysis it can be seen that some students who addressed the question of *If you had the power to change one thing about Irish society, what would you change and why?* directly addressed issues around hostility - such as violence or aggression. Some 11% (N=39) of students sampled suggested that they would change anti-social behaviour if they had the power:

[Change] I would change the crime rate because there is a lot of murders, robberies, attacks etc. every week (QQ229).

I would change crime, violence and discrimination because it all happens too often and need to be stopped (QQ272).

[Change] the violence – it is becoming ridiculous the levels of attacks (QQ293)

Rural Ireland can be understood to not necessarily share these dangers:

the city is seen as a dangerous place. Bad things happen in cities, whereas there is a perception of safety in rural areas, partly because they are generally less busy, less diverse and less anonymous (McManus, 2003:33-34).

Ray highlights the personal insecurity of Dublin contrasted against the more personal security of rurality:

But in Dublin its beginning to get a lot more scared there's lots more locks on doors. Older people are a lot more scared and stuff. There's a lot more crime committed and stuff but when you go out further from Dublin it's a lot different. It's a lot like more homely up in Donegal all our relatives leave the key in the door so they don't have to get up and open it. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

The intimate rural community offers a personal security that may be absent from Dublin. Paul, also attending A1 School, depicts a lucid community quality of belonging evident in Rural Ireland that appears absent from Dublin:

It's just like more of a community [in Rural Ireland] because like I go to Galway every third weekend and I'd go down for two days and see family for the first day and go out the second. And just like walking through the town you'd know half the people you'd see. But you know half the people there. And everybody be real friendly towards each other. But I mean like cause Dublin is so big like you can't really get that. There's so many people obviously not everybody is going to be friends with each other and I think that's why it's like people aren't really as friendly in Dublin. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Paul places an understanding of community around belonging and being known within a social environment that allows, essentially, unmediated social interactions. Of course the size of urban Dublin disallows unmediated social interactions so when there is no articulated appreciation of a Dublin community - or communities - there can be some understanding of a singular rural community in Rural Ireland that differs in content to Dublin. Part of this difference is how Rural Ireland is more connected to Irish identity, through being 'friendly towards each other' than Dublin is for some young people.

Williams has written of community that:

Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (*state, nation, society*, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing terms (1976:66).

Young people certainly pick up on the positive conceptualisation suggested with the idea of a *Rural Community* however for Brennan a particular type of community may be emerging in Ireland:

If the post-modernists' understanding of community become fully embedded in contemporary culture, the issue will not be whether one is in or out of community. Rather, it will be a matter of deciding to which community one chooses to belong. Communities that are open to diversity will be more attractive to the post-modern

sensibility, whereas communities that strive to be homogeneous will close themselves off from the diversity that is inherent in the post-modern thought and way of life (2001:50).

Perhaps paradoxically young people's negotiation of community seems to lead away from absolute post-modernisation because, as it stands, the articulation of community is only expressed about Rural Ireland. Urban Ireland appears *de-communitised* as young people do not identify themselves as belonging to a community. However the dynamic of rural community and urban non-community can be seen perhaps as part of a post-modernising process. Niamh and Janet, for instance, who each would be expected to challenge any conceptualisation of Irishness as closed to change or indeed completely fixed in the context of their own understanding of Irish identity, when discussing the theme of rurality exhibited an uncharacteristic un-reflexive approach, particularly towards the conformity attached to rural religious rituals. A religious community is emphasised in Rural Ireland, though in Dublin it is a post-modern choice, but there is no sensing that religion in Dublin is a community, as with Niamh:

I mean when you go down the country whatever, you do actually hear a mass, big thing Sunday. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Niamh accepts that Mass is a 'big thing', and the rural Ireland she knows is 'very very Catholic', but she places an important sensing of community in rurality; *Sunday Mass is a time that the community gathers*. However it is evident that the mode of religious belonging to the *rural community* does not extend to Niamh's understanding of belonging to the *national community* in how she articulates her understanding of Irish identity:

No longer you can't categorise Irishness as Roman Catholic anymore cause that's just not the way it is anymore full stop. Because it's not. So I mean yeah I mean if someone said to me you're not Roman Catholic therefore you're not Irish that would be a bone of contention. I don't think you can say that anymore... I think in my family because of that imposing of religion I think that's why our parents – or a lot of our parents or some of our parents anyway – are giving us choice now and are not imposing religion on us. And I think it's a very very good thing. I think it should be up to the person themselves to discover their own spirituality throughout their own life and make their own decisions.

Niamh places a more defined meaning on rural community belonging - from her own experience - but does not offer any overlap of this defined and delineated sense of belonging with what it means for her to be Irish. Though Janet and Niamh could be regarded as unquestionably tolerant and questioning towards identity, demonstrating reflexivity towards who they are, they engage with communally enforced social rituals, in attending mass, though both, in their own ways, do not necessarily accept their symbolic validity.

Jenkins has written that:

Ritualised affirmation of ascriptive identity isn't only a matter of individual membership or affective affirmation, however, nor is it confined to initiation or recruitment. Ritual also plays an important part in the creation and communication of organisational common knowledge in the interests of coordination (2004:151).

Niamh and Janet exhibit recognition of rituals that are still deemed important and that they feel obliged to observe; despite the disavowal of many aspects of traditional or rural Ireland, the legacy of importance to a Catholic Rural Ireland continues to be somewhat reproduced in the contemporary urban realm. In trying to explain why both Niamh and Janet participate in ritualised practices that seem to hold no power over who they are certainly when in Dublin, it is useful to consider how Barry, also from A3 School, identified a particular mode of community operational '*in the country*' based upon adherence to communal rituals rather than family discipline or individual reflexivity:

Outside of the cities its [Irish identity] pretty much mono-ethnic stuff. Outside of the cities, down the country you're Catholic or you know, you're nothing. Even down in the country. Like I lived down in Wicklow for a year and basically everyone goes to church. The school is the church. You walk out of the school doors you're at the gates of the church. You grow up having it forced down throats and there's no question of whether you're Catholic or not, you just take it for granted. (Interview conducted Winer 2005).

Barry's experience of living 'down the country' - where Catholicism is seen both to matter and be taken as naturally assumed - is a theme also shared by those young people who have not lived 'down the country'. Niamh, for instance, saw that if there was any overlapping association between Roman Catholicism and Irishness it was only, if existent, operational 'down the

country' where possibly 'they still have that kind of notion in their heads; where there's still more of that influence anyway'. Niamh herself showed absolutely no concern that this association could be contemporarily fixed in Urban Ireland suggesting that the power to determine or influence her sense of identity was principally located in Urban Ireland.

A consideration of community highlights that young people establish a dichotomy between Rural and Urban Ireland showing one mode of life to be viewed as socially integrated whilst the other is presented as generally socially atomised. When Urban Ireland is complex and has multifarious identity influences, Rural Ireland is negotiated through emphasising an identity of rootedness and consistency. Views underlying a clearly defined distinction between Dublin and rural living shows young people utilising different pictures of Irish identity dependent upon the context of atomised Dublin or integrated Rural Ireland:

Alan - In Dublin be more like people want to make loads of money so they be more selfish and not as friendly as people who live down the country.

Christopher - It's more commercialised in Dublin.

Damien - In the country they don't have visitors as often and treat them well they still have good music in pubs and stuff, friendlier.

Lee - Dublin's more exposed its like any city in the world but if you go down the country its not as corrupted - with money, the obsession with designer clothes and all that stuff like - if you walked down Grafton street you'd just see designer shops all around.

Patrick - Like when you come to Dublin you got like the cinema, arcades, whereas down the country you can't. Pubs are the only form of entertainment you've got.

Damien - That's why they're all drunk! (Interview conducted Winer 2004).

Clearly the understanding of Rural Ireland is designed around a limited but collectively integrative community. Rural Ireland is seen as less modernised as it is less commercially immersed or commercially conscious than Dublin. Rural Ireland is friendlier and the option for enjoying free time revolves around socialising in one popular site - the pub - against the variety of possible socialising sites in Dublin. Dublin is situated as different and how identity can be constructed in Dublin fundamentally differs:

Lee - People in Dublin just seem more rushed, you go down the country everything is so laid back. Everyone [in Dublin] is just rushing constantly.

Paul - Always have things to do.

Jo - Do you think with Dublin you could transfer it to another city?

Paul - It still has its own heart.

Christopher - A pub on every street corner it's a very Irish tradition.

Edward - I'd say it's the same as every other country or any other city like.

What's so different about Dublin that's so different to London except for its size?

Lee - Liffey?

Paul - It's really old. It's really historical. Half the buildings in Dublin come from the seventeen hundreds eighteen hundreds which you don't get in most other countries. Think of well, especially the capital cities. I think it has its own identity. As a capital city and it's kind of special that way.

Alan - It's like that with sports. If you thought it could be any other city when there's a match in Lansdowne or Croke Park? There's huge crowds like, and so it shows we're still altogether, we're all Irish.

Paul - The city is still small in comparison to other cities. You can get out of Dublin City in 10 minutes it's not like far away. It's easy to get to the countryside and all, it's not far.

Christopher - Helicopter! (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Though Edward suggested Dublin was an urbanised space and similar to urbanised spaces outside of Ireland - so sharing similar trans-national urban values - it can be seen that other group members rejected Edward's position and searched for characteristic markings of Dublin - its river, the number of pubs, its sporting events - from other international urban spaces. Paul clearly showed the highest regard for the distinguished historical buildings within the city but it is notable that he also minimally scaled the urban - 'You can get out of Dublin City in 10 minutes' - where as in fact it might still be difficult 'to get to the countryside' even in Ryan's 'Helicopter' in the ten minutes suggested by Paul.

The sense of modern rootlessness can be transferred to a rurality steeped in traditional rootedness to a fixed place and a sense of friendly integrated community and belonging. Though the construction of Rural Ireland is essentially through modernity with rather obvious processes

of selecting projections fitting Rural Ireland, young people in A1 School were universally pronounced in distinguishing rural from urban space around the embedded notion of Irish friendliness in Rural Ireland against the materialism of Dublin:

Alan - No like [difference between rural and urban Ireland] just seems that way. We'd be as friendly but - like I would be anyway - there'd be people there [in Dublin] executives of companies and all. If they were in McDonald's and there was a Chinese person they'd be giving out to them - they'd be thinking, "I need this I need to get done with this". But in the country they'd be all friendly.

Paul - Yeah at times.

Alan - They'd care about the other person.

Damien - You wouldn't have a chat with the person sitting beside you on the bus that you didn't know up here but like you would down the country with someone you didn't know you'd start talking to.

Christopher - It depends on what type of person you are you can't judge the country, I'd talk to anyone.

Paul - Depends who you sit beside. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

There is a tension within Alan's sensing of Irishness relating to how Irishness is imagined as universally applied across Ireland but operationalised selectively within Ireland. Though Paul, who returns to a town in County Galway every third weekend, attempts to temper the universalising of the friendly notion of Rural Ireland within the group, the overall positive feeling towards Rural Ireland is quite evident from other group members. Though Paul unquestionably embraces a conceptualisation of *the rural community* he consistently highlights the limitations of this universalism. After Alan has made his comments that 'in the country they'd be all friendly', Paul followed this by stating, 'Yeah at times'. When Damien suggested an example of friendliness was how 'down the country' you may talk openly to the person next to you on a bus but such behaviour would be completely avoided in Dublin, Paul suggested that talking to the person was contextually related to 'who you sit beside'.

From the above descriptions it is notable that young people not only fundamentally differentiate Rural Ireland from Urban Ireland but continue to privilege the notion that Rural Ireland holds a greater weight of practice upon Irish identity than how Irish identity may be experienced in Dublin. It has been seen above that a central differentiating notion between Urban

and Rural Ireland relates to an idea that young people can see themselves as modern in comparison to people in Rural Ireland. This theme of modernity is central not only to how young people conceptualise a difference between Rural and Urban Ireland but is central to how young people see themselves and share an understanding that Rural Ireland is Other.

### 10.3 Emphasising Modernity

Dublin is modernised compared to the projected visualisation of a rural economy, the rural community or rural cultural practices. Identity construction in Dublin is seen as multifarious and considered less connected to an essence of Irish identity seen in the projected views towards Rural Ireland. Rurality is homogenised and structured towards an identity that reinforces the particularity of Irishness, while comparatively Dublin reinforces extensive differences. It is not that the differentiating of Irishness for young people leads to a rejection of their own Irish identity, it is rather, as Wendy states, people in Rural Ireland are ‘just so much more Irish’. The ‘more Irish’ is fundamentally related to how materially unmodernised Rural Ireland is projected to be when compared to Dublin:

Wendy - But there’s some places down the country you just wouldn’t go! There’s nothing.

Sandra – Yeah we’re just so used to going to the cinema and stuff.

Wendy – Yeah like you have to travel miles just to go to the cinema or shopping there’s no buses or anything. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Rural Ireland may be ‘*more Irish*’ than life in Dublin but it is socially limiting in not offering the expected modern amenities accepted as guaranteed in urban settings. The comparative awareness of the opportunities offered in Urban Ireland outweigh any losses that may occur to a heightened national sensing by continuing to live in Dublin, as against the ‘*more Irish*’ environment of Rural Ireland.

People can often start out on any discussion of rurality by parodying Rural Ireland. Edith, from C1 School, identified rurality as associated around ‘They’re backward like, and we’re not we’re like modern’. When this group were asked if they thought that there was a difference in being Irish in and outside Dublin the response showed a marked dis-engagement with idyllically pictured rurality:



Cathy – They shag sheep [group laughter]. Seriously!

Rose – Well like they're culchies right? (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though other groups also distanced themselves from an association with Rural Ireland - Wendy's 'Bogger-land' or Jenny's 'The meadows' - it was the manner of this group's distancing that differed markedly from other groups. Cathy and Rose abusively berated Rural Ireland as the opposite to their Urban Ireland - not only do people 'shag sheep' but people in Rural Ireland are fixed as 'culchies'. The way in which Rose uses the term would seem to with Eagleton's application of the term 'culchies':

is the Dubliner's contemptuous word for all those Irish who are ill-starred enough not to live in the capital. Culchies are bumpkins, eejits (idiots), yokes (yokels), who eat their cabbage with a pitchfork and think pasta is a name for a priest (1999:104).

No other group makes any reference to Culchies and the manner in which it was employed by Rose suggests a particular understanding of who lives in Rural Ireland. When this group was asked what they thought it was like *in the country*, the group essentially connected a difference between Rural and Urban Ireland, similar to the A4 groups, around the differing modern social opportunities:

Deirdre – It's not like Dublin they don't have the opportunities we do. They've got nothing. See I'm fifteen minutes away from [Dublin] town and maybe Limerick isn't bad but like if you wanted to go to the city you'd be ages.

Edith – Yeah my Granny's' living in [outside Galway] and it takes two hours to get in and there's nothing around her.

Cathy – They've got nothing to do. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Wickham has written that Dublin 'has a shared physical reality that the nation often does not have' (2006:151) and this can be somewhat seen in how this group negotiate rural and urban cleavages. Rurality is not privileged as the definite expression of Irishness pervaded by Irish culture, rather rurality is pervaded by 'nothing to do'. As with Wendy and Sandra, in A4 School, it is seen that Rural Ireland is distinguished as limiting and in Deirdre's reading of Rural Ireland people have 'got nothing to do'. Deirdre does see how urban identity elsewhere in Ireland could be similar to Dublin but living outside the parameters of an Irish city limits the options available to what one may do and who one may be.

As with other middle class students it is seen that Rural Ireland holds no immediate appeal as against the socialising opportunities available in Dublin. Though young working class people can echo the views of young middle class people towards material modernity they can also engage quite differently with Rural Ireland. It is notable that young working class people do not pick up any privileged sensing of Irishness as removed from their own urban social environment. When some middle class students could describe Rural Ireland as '*real Ireland*' or '*true Ireland*' no such privileging is made by working class students. It is not that Irishness is undifferentiated and shared equally between Rural and Urban Ireland but rather young working class people do not saturate Rural Ireland as the definitive expression of *true Irishness*.

It would seem that a factor in determining the relationship towards rurality is the contact young people may have with Rural Ireland. It is not that only middle class students frequently talked of relatives in the country - Edith was the only working class student to highlight any family in the country - but also it is common for young middle class people to attend a Gaeltacht - almost exclusively situated in rural settings - at some point in their school life. The same level of engagement with Gaeltachts is not reflected as the usual experience of working class people. It is not simply that no working class student made reference to ever having attended a Gaeltacht but a class bias is also evident in the networks of secondary schools and Gaeltachts that organise stays which generally cater for middle class school. Eagleton, in his humorous portrayal characterising the Irish, touches upon an important factor that may feedback and shape the different attitudes of some young people:

Culchies... regard Dublin as a seething sink of corruption which makes Gomaorrah look like Goldilocks land, and suspect that the flashy, fornicating, tofu-eating jackeens (Dubliners) aren't truly Irish' (1999:104-105).

Young middle class people may receive these notions towards Dublin and the 'truly Irish' identity of Rural Ireland more frequently than young working class people through their contact with people outside of Dublin. It is not simply that quite a few middle class young people talked of attending the Gaeltacht but it is also through family and friendship contacts that may help reinforce a feeling that 'truly Irish' is found outside Dublin in Rural Ireland. Patrick from A1 School, for instance, in addressing the contact he may have with people outside his immediate urban environment, talked of both friendships and family networks extending beyond Dublin:

[I have] Relatives and friends like [outside Dublin] you know? You might have friends from when you went to Irish College you might go down and visit them once in a while, depends. (Interview conducted Winter 2004).

Quite a number of young middle class students made such references - Paul also from A1 School goes to a town in Galway every third week to be with family and Eoin from the other grouping in A1 is from Kerry. Keohane and Kuhling (2004) point out that a large number of people living in Dublin are from rural areas. Though a significant amount of people living in Dublin do come from rural backgrounds it seems, certainly regarding this research sample, to be more concentrated with middle class than with working class people.

However though young people do seem to have uneven contact with family or friends in Rural Ireland it is seen that some overlap does exist with how all young people can visualise rurality as less modernised than Dublin and this modernisation both shapes views towards rurality but importantly views towards Irish identity. The associative constructiveness of Irish identity around traditionalised values is evident in one of the questionnaire suggestions from a young person, in A4 School, that Ireland should:

Keep the language, keep the music and don't get caught up in the industrialized world, where nothing but money matters (QQ126).

Though this young person did not mention Rural Ireland, their presentation of Irishness is infused with the imagery of a pre-modern Ireland, highly suggestive of how Rural Ireland is commonly envisioned. How Irishness is pictured by this student appears strongly themed around the traditional characterisation:

The dominant ideology which informed Mr. de Valera's vision was the restoration of a rural, Catholic, Gaelic society, which would facilitate the energetic pursuit of its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. The low priority to be accorded to the material aspects of life was evident from an early stage (Boylan, 1986:32).

Richard Sennett describes 'a weak identity' as 'clinging to a rigid image of self, a lack of capacity to revise when circumstances require it' (2000:177). Though young people can be considered engaged and reflexive in the construction of their identity there is no doubt that the visioning of particular understandings of Irish identity, for some young people, implies 'a weak identity'. It is a 'weak' individual identity that spills over into a weak collective identity that continues to essentialise an idealised conceptualisation of Rural Ireland as the definitive mode of

Irishness. The opposite, one assumes, of Sennett's 'weak identity' would be a strong identity that is considerate and active. The responses of a group from A3 School to the comment above (QQ126) is indicative of both an active identity but also perhaps a generally expected attitude of young people towards this very specific national picture:

Sean - Bet they came from the country.

Jo - No Dublin south-central.

Jill - Really!

Peter - That's a bit too much from one side. Its either the Industrial Modern World or the Backwards Traditional Irish.

Sean - You have to find somewhere in the middle.

Dennis - It's not like the industrial world is taking away from our Irishness... That's rubbish.

Barry - You're only Irish if you live in a big thatched cottage!

Dennis - It's looking back. (Interview conducted Winter 2005).

Though the group actively distanced themselves from accepting this projected vision of Irishness, it is evident that within the rebuffing responses, that rurality - *which is not mentioned in the comment* - retains some identity element. This continuation of rurality - even the 'big thatched cottage' imagery - is all the more noteworthy given O'Toole's comments:

The truth is that rural Ireland no longer exists. Since the arrival of television, the motor car and the multinational company there are really only three kinds of places in Ireland - cities, extended suburbia of commuters and farmers, and depopulated areas where almost no one lives by farming alone (quoted in Lee, 1999:78).

Though Rural Ireland may be extinct for O'Toole it remains visioned as a constituent in constructing forms of Irishness for young people. Sean's immediate response to the questionnaire comment is a picturing of a rurally situated subject who identifies their Irishness with essentially the themes of a de Valerian embodied Irishness; *the language, the music* and the opposite - anti-materialism - of the modern materialistic industrial world. Though Sean suggested some mode of balance between the questionnaire's projected Irishness and general collective Irish identity there is no doubt that he would distance himself from such a stationary view of Irishness, represented by the student in A4 School. Jill, like Sean, showed surprise that

the comment did not come from someone in Rural Ireland but rather from a person in the same broad geographical compass as themselves. Jill's level of surprise is understandable given our consideration of modernity above and the different opportunities suggested in living in Dublin compared to Rural Ireland. Peter highlights the dichotomy between Irishness as either exclusively 'Modern' or wholly 'Traditional'. Peter's reflection of the questionnaire comment essentially points to how young people negotiate the rural in urban Modern Ireland - Ireland is either one or the other, it is either Traditional or it is Modern; rurality is not in-between modernity or traditionalism it is simply understood as one or the other. The outcome of this reflection is essentially how Ian positions the statement, "It's not like the industrial world is taking away from our Irishness... That's rubbish.... It's looking back". The derogatory 'looking back' position suggested an important placement of what it was like in Traditional Ireland. Though it may be expected that a young person in A4 School would distance their understanding of Irishness from traditionalism it can be seen that this distancing is also evident in a working class grouping who also distanced themselves markedly from the questionnaire comment:

Elaine – No Jesus what are we going to do? I'd go mad.

Ann – Think of the fiddle-oi music. You'd go mad. (Interview conducted Spring 2005).

Though Ann essentialises the idea of a singular musical cultural expression in Rural Ireland Elaine again emphasises the dominant favourable theme of comparison between Urban and Rural Ireland; that actually being in Rural Ireland has a very limited appeal.

## 10.4 Conclusion

From the ruralism of Yeats, the Dream Speech of de Valera or the contemporary representations from the GAA or tourists bodies, rural themes have been and remain something associated with Irish identity. Though the reality of contemporary Ireland would suggest that Rural and Urban Ireland share very imprecise cultural boundaries, certainly if one accepts O'Toole's analysis, young people hold views towards Rural Ireland that imply social relations operate radically differently beyond Dublin. At the most ideal people in Rural Ireland are projected as commonly speaking Irish, to be fully engaged and conscious of their communities commitments, play Gaelic games and listen to and play Irish music; people in Rural Ireland are, in essence, in a state

of total emersion in traditional Irish culture. Central to many young people's understandings of Rural Ireland is the sense that it is unpolluted by material modernisation and retains and fully practices Irish social qualities like being welcoming and being friendly. When Urban Ireland is split by differing identities and influences upon identity construction, Rural Ireland is simplified, unified and complete in emphasising 'the language, the music, the community thing'. Though Rural Ireland is fundamentally placed as offering more limiting socialising opportunities than Dublin it also offers a different and more purified mode of being Irish and a simpler and more readily shared and commonly understood frame for Irish identity than may necessarily be understood to apply in Dublin. Though there is some difference in classed privileging the overriding theme in negotiating rurality is how shared the marked differences are projected as between Rural Ireland and Dublin. Rural cultural markings are presented as socially naturalised experiences and sentiments of Irishness that serve to distinguish Dublin Irish identity from rural Irish identity.

Writing of the immediacy of the Irish emigrant experiences in 1980s New York City Mary Corcoran identifies 'a dual process of *distancing* oneself from Ireland, while at the same time *embracing* one's sense of "Irishness"' as a response to forced economic migration' (1993:116). The distancing process involves remembering that Irish economic underdevelopment and mismanagement essentially compelled emigration while the embracing process for the migrant involves, 'a heightened sense of Irish identity, and the maintenance of close ties with home' (Corcoran, 1993:117). When looking at young people's, particularly middle class young people's, vision of Rural Ireland we can also identify a dual process operating; where we have both selective distancing and for some young people a very selective embracing of Rural Ireland.

Young people celebrate and embrace the prescribed values of friendliness and welcoming attributed to Rural Ireland for instance and privilege Rural Ireland above Dublin as a more complete expression of Irish identity. The homogenous projection of Rural Ireland does not allow for any fissures in identity, as identity is commonly shared and simplified around particular markers. Some young people certainly seem to embrace the notion of simplifying identity, where Irish identity can be understood to operate around easily identifiable and shared cultural markers. The distancing process can be seen in how very few young people seemed to support a de Valerian return to Rural Ireland, with the implied restraint upon materialism and the suggested conformity of expression that this might imply.

Young people's understandings towards Rural Ireland suggested that there were two separate Ireland's; one is Modern and the other unmodern. Desmond Fennell considers how the identity linkages between Irishness and rurality were a response to insipid urbanity and an attempt to develop a Gaelic humanist consciousness:

the exaltation of "rural" life was not merely of the rural *per se*, but also of the rural understood, ideologically, as a balanced material and spiritual life - a properly *human* life as distinct from the inhuman life of a materialistic, urbanised age. Ruralism, in this aspect, was a humanism opposed to the contemporary, dehumanising materialism (1983:69).

Fennell may feel that 'Ruralism' may have been ideologically designed under the Traditional Paradigm as 'opposed to the contemporary, dehumanising materialism' but young people generally celebrate and embrace the 'materialism' of contemporary Dublin and distance themselves from embracing the proposed 'balanced material and spiritual life'. The values projected onto Rural Ireland, for young people, can firmly stay in Rural Ireland and this certainly speaks of a distance between the identities of modern Dublin and unmodern Ireland.

A 'dual process' of identification is operable for young people but this process is highly unbalanced. Views towards Rural Ireland's Irishness are essentialised into rurality but young people remain firmly rooted and committed to the values of urban modernity. When Eagleton and Gibbons can each attribute the vision of the rural Irish idyllic to urbanites it can be seen that young urbanite people in Dublin are also constructing a very urban picture of Rural Ireland. The idealised construction of Rural Ireland can be seen as a process explicitly labelling Irish identity which could be seen as an immediate response to the social dynamic of Dublin. The questioning of what comprises Irishness in Dublin has to address the evident multicultural complexity of Dublin and the materialism of the city which can be juxtaposed against the projected prevailing altruism of Rural Ireland. The social dynamics of Dublin disallow an understanding of an evenly shared Irish identity and promote something of an apathy towards Irishness; the experience of Dublin - its pace of living, its opportunities or its dangers - is socially disconnecting for some young people and the social environment towards even learning about the city's history is one where, according to Eoin, 'People ain't really bothered anymore'. The substance of Irish identity that Dublin lacks can be proposed as evident in an uncomplicated and essentialised understanding of Rural Ireland. Rural Ireland can represent '*true Irish*', '*more Irish*' or '*real*

*Irish*' when Modern Irishness is marked by 'multiple non-exclusive, rather than single exclusive affiliations, and affiliations determined by choice rather than birth. People often juggle multiple affiliations, many of which have little to do with nationalism or ethnicity (Komito, 2004:173). Rural Ireland is marked by a consistency and shared sense of identity that speaks of identity factors associated with Traditional Ireland as themes still employed in constructing Irish identity. Though few people in this study may identify with rural living it can be appreciated that rurality remains a conceptualised point of reference of what is Irishness for young people. Despite Ireland being definitionally an urban society the marking of rurality remains a presence upon the construction of Irishness for young people in Dublin.



# Chapter 11

## Paradigms of Irishness for young people

This final chapter will codify young peoples' various understandings of Irish identity within differing paradigms of Irishness. Before considering how various understandings can be seen to inform, ground and shape views towards Irish identity, an important point must initially be highlighted about any attempt to categorise identity, particularly the extremely diverse meanings implicit within contemporary Irish identity articulated by young people. Though each paradigm is designed as a separate understanding of identity - where each contains specific reference points of meaning that together can act, or at least try to act, to construct particular meanings - these various understandings can and fundamentally do in practice overlap and intermingle. This complexity reflects the fact illustrated throughout this study that identity can, and is, itself experienced differently by young people themselves when challenged and placed within different contexts. The paradigmatic analysis of identity presented here is intended to encapsulate the range of meanings attached to Irish identity that young people make under different situational demands. One particular understanding of Irishness may suggest itself in one specific context. When, however, that context changes an individual can move across meanings and adopt another understanding of Irishness, perhaps one at odds with what may be implied by previously articulated understandings. Though I have demonstrated that young people construe identity through different though sometimes overlapping meanings of Irishness, it is still possible to codify those understandings as they are expressed by young people in Dublin.

I argue that there are three dominant meanings in young people's understanding of contemporary Irish identity: These are:

- The traditional paradigm;

- The modern paradigm, and;
- The post-modern paradigm.

The traditional paradigm remains a potent influence within identity construction but not necessarily in the way young people engage with self-identification. Though some young people could unquestionably value Gaelic sports and the Irish language as a more authentic expression of Irishness than non-Gaelic sports or the English language, they tend not to connect these constituents into something approaching a comprehensive self-understood framework for identification. However, young people can and often do suggest that the traditional paradigm is the predominant lens through which *other people* negotiate and recognize Irishness.

A generally accepted line of argument holds that a modernisation of Irish identity has occurred. Contemporary Irish identity has been impacted, to some degree, by factors such as secularisation, individualisation, commercialisation and globalisation, with the result that contemporary Irish identity has become ‘not-what-it-was’ Irishness. Edith’s suggested distinction between urban and rural Ireland would also commonly hold as a description of traditional versus modern Ireland; ‘They’re backward like and we’re not we’re like modern’. If any paradigm of Irishness points towards a sense of shared understanding of Irish identity - values that are both emphasised by young people but also projected by young people onto the Generalised Other - it is some general notion of a modern paradigm of Irishness.

There is no doubt that diverse meanings abound around contemporary Irish identity. In an attempt to try and narrow meanings but also reflect the diversity of this modernist paradigm itself, I have deconstructed it further into three separate, though inter-connected categories:

- Tra-modern Irish
- Modern Irish
- Inventive Modern Irish

Segmenting the modern paradigm in this way reflects how identity is managed under different circumstances when under different demands. The Tra-modern is the most immediate sense of Irishness generally expressed by young people but as complexities of identifications are added young people then try and manage Irishness through the modern Irish and/or the inventive modern Irish approaches. To simplify how these various understandings towards identity can operate we can position the Tra-modern as focusing upon and linking with positive aspects of Irishness that have some implied connection with the past. The Modern Irish approach places an

emphasis upon the present/modern where Irishness is expressed within the compass of being modern, affected by and engaged with modern social processes. The inventive modern Irish approach implies a concern with the past, the present but also the future which allows Irishness to be approached from highly individualised viewpoints that redraw and open definitions of Irishness to both adjustment and fixity.

The Tra-modern understanding shows an historical anchorage based upon selectively embracing themes that may have some associations with notions of Traditional Irishness, like Irish people being friendly, helpful and welcoming for instance. Tra-modern Irish identity shows how young people firmly re-embed and accept values associated with sociable notions of traditional Ireland/Irishness in emphasising their own contemporary meanings of identity. Tra-modern understanding powerfully affects understandings of Irish identity and grounds Irish identity as a highly positive social value.

While the basis of Tra-modern Irish identity is in emphasising factors seen as developed from the past/the traditional, modern Irish identity is rather an emphasis upon the present or the contemporary. Within the modern Irish framework there is a heightened conscious effort to question and interrogate identity. For instance Tra-modern understandings may say to young people “We Irish are friendly, tolerant and welcoming” while the modern Irish understanding moves on from this and analytically reflects that “Some Irish people are also unfriendly, racists and non-welcoming”. While the Tra-modern pulls from the past only what could be regarded as positive factors of identification the modern Irish is often questioning of the past. Furthermore, young people consider contemporary Irish identity as open to various identity influences that present alternatives in framing both *who I am* and *who we are*. Young people situate themselves within a sociality that emphasises the pace of their lives as accelerated and changing.

The final understanding considered within the modern paradigm is inventive modern identity. This perspective recognises Irishness as changing and fundamentally marked by difference, but crucially, it seeks to redraw what it is to be Irish within loose boundaries. Though all modern understandings accept that Irish identity may be marked by a change from the traditional to the modern, and also marked by individual difference, the inventive modern approach uniquely positions Irish identity as floating over many different points of identification rather than necessarily grounded specifically or permanently in one predominant meaning. Though like all modernist understandings this approach accepts individual negotiations of

identity, there is within this paradigm a heightened sense of individuality. However though individuality is a strong feature within this approach there remains a sense that even though Ireland and Irish identity has and is changing, and even though people may draw what it is to be Irish from various perspectives, a generally shared sense of Irish identity remains. In some respects it is a sense of identity that has both to be determined but also must remain somewhat floating above permanently fixed points.

The final paradigm that I consider is the post-modern paradigm. Though Smith may feel that a proposed post-modernist paradigm is ‘too fragmentary and sketchy as yet to merit the designation of ‘paradigm’’ (2001:57) an attempt, though perhaps ‘fragmentary and sketchy’, to outline what is perhaps a developing post-modern paradigm of Irishness is offered. Though conceptually the post-modern unquestionably has, as Bell points out, ‘certain difficulties’ when used in an Irish context - most obviously for Bell that ‘Ireland never really experienced a form of socially engaged modernism’ (1988:228) - the idea of a post-modern Ireland has some currency. Jim MacLaughlin, like Bell, emphasises the post-modern as a way that people engage with Irishness:

Ireland has become a postmodern *society* before becoming a modern *nation*. The modernisation of Ireland and of Irish society in the Sixties and Seventies has now been followed by a process of post-modernisation since the Eighties... the very country itself is being restructured and recreated (1997:2, italics in original).

Certainly how social processes can be experienced in Ireland may suggest a degree of post-modernisation. Keohane and Kuhling seem to place young people in Ireland within a post-modern sociality when writing that:

The newfound affluence and the decline of a traditional moral hegemony have presented young Irish people with tremendous new freedoms and opportunities. Young people are no longer forced to emigrate; they have work, opportunities, and money to spend. They have choices to make, things to do and places to go. Perhaps - and this is the paradox and the tragedy - too much so: infinite choices, limitless horizons, insatiable desires, a condition of morbidity and danger (2004:39).

The discussion of the modern paradigm shows how young people ‘have choices to make, things to do and places to go’ but perhaps these choices are not conducted under modern sociality -

something assumed to guarantee national identity - but under a post-modern sociality which may even question the necessity of national identity.

Certain tenets of postmodernist philosophy directly challenge the ability of a national identity to reproduce itself with any collectively shared social meaning, indeed under post-modernity national identity attachments can be viewed as thin at best or even non-existent. Though on a level of self-identification there are no grounds for any general argument declaring young people hold a post-national identity there are perhaps grounds for suggesting a post-modernising identity. By considering the different levels of symbolic identification, the radically different interpretations of Irishness and the inability to establish any consistently shared widespread meanings underpinning Irishness, it is possible that some young peoples' views of Irish identity evolve in a post-modernising space that makes Irish identity fundamentally impossible to secure definitively.

## **11.1 Traditional Paradigm**

Though the design of the traditional paradigm is intended to be something of an ideal-type framework some concession should be immediately made to the ability of this conceptualisation of identity to fundamentally inform, and for some structure and determine, understandings of Irish identity for much of the twentieth century. Graham, for instance, writes of how the ideology of 'Irish-Ireland' had the effect of commanding 'a startling degree of manipulated cultural homogeneity upon the twenty-six counties' (1997:8). How this 'cultural homogeneity' informed identity is highlighted by Fuller's description of de Valera's conception of 'true Irishness' which isolates central tenets of authentic Irishness as rurally embedded, Gaelicist and Roman Catholic (2004:5). What were important characterisations for de Valera regarding 'true Irishness' was certainly also important for many other people in and outside Ireland. Though de Valera's conception of 'true Irishness' or the ideology of 'Irish-Ireland' may not fully explain all understandings or expressions of Irish identity that existed for the first half or into the latter half of the twentieth century, or indeed as some young people understand it into the twenty-first century, it could certainly be argued to be the hegemonic understanding that many people held towards Irishness for much of the last century.

The constituents of the traditional paradigm are immediately evident in twenty-first century Ireland. The Irish language, for instance, remains a compulsory school subject and

remains constitutionally privileged. Similarly the Roman Catholic Church, despite its decreasing power in recent years, can at least try to shape identity through the advantage of controlling the majority of schools in Dublin and Ireland and through its access to and exercise of social and political power. Given that particular constituents of the traditional paradigm continue to enjoy some formal recognition in Irish society it is perhaps unsurprising then that the impact of the formatted ideal-type understanding of identity still resonates with young people negotiating understandings of Irishness. Of course, in many respects, why not? It is not simply the attempts to legitimise religion or the Irish language in schools but young people are informed about this 'Irish-Ireland' understanding through wider processes of socialisation. For instance even if young people are not involved in the formal study of history at school, though many are, they are still presented with a popular discourse that it was Irish nationalism - fuelled by notions of diffuse Gaelicism and Catholicism - that resisted British colonialism and eventually brought independence. In the context of reading Irish history, the popular understanding is that Irish nationalism *was* 'the resistance to imperialism'.

How particular constituents from the traditional paradigm can frame meanings towards Irish identity can be seen in some approaches towards religion. Regarding Catholic identity, for instance, many young people not only appreciate how important this can be for their parents or for older people but also understand that this can encourage a privileged connection between Catholicism and Irishness. John Waters, writing in 1997, complained that there was no evident pluralism in Ireland, just pontificated pluralism around binary understandings which simplified Ireland into 'just two sides' where 'An argument is either old or new, traditional or modern, conservative or liberal. Anything else is inconceivable' (1997:58). Though Waters may have difficulty in seeing himself 'in the available constructs' (ibid) many young people can essentially understand themselves within this binary scheme. The Traditional Paradigm is seen as firmly understood as applying to Waters 'old', 'traditional' and indeed 'conservative' Ireland. In some respect young people share in what may be described as the hegemonic discourse regarding the modernisation of Irish identity; Irishness has changed from something represented by traditional Irishness into something fundamentally different.

The Ireland of the late twentieth or early twenty-first century is generally always suggested as enjoying greater social freedoms, and an indisputably different social reality, than the Ireland of the mid to early twentieth-century. When McLoughlin writes that 'Ireland from the

1920s up to the 1980s had no room for diversity, pluralism and heterogeneity. Many groups were ignored, censored and made outcast (1994:87)', this is an Ireland young people accept. There is a notion that Irish identity was once consistently mono-cultural and framed by values associated with the traditional paradigm. It is only in recent years that the markers and practice of being Irish may have been extensively transformed, particularly in Dublin. Indeed a striking feature of young peoples' consideration of Irish identity is the level of consensus about the fact that being Irish today, or being Irish in Dublin, is different, in some way, to what being Irish may have been in the past or to the experience of being Irish outside Dublin.

### **11.1.1 Idealisation and tension**

The idealisation of the traditional paradigm is quite evident in the placement of rural Ireland. Young peoples' construction of rural Ireland generally speaks of an idealisation of Irishness suggesting themes like religion and language retain a powerful presence within Irish identity construction, even though how rural Ireland is constructed may appear quite removed from how Irishness is actually itself considered or practiced in rural Ireland. The theme of rural Ireland may point towards the idealised authentic vision of Irishness for some young people but its construction persistently highlights how the picture of the Nation is, if anything, fragmented by a deep tension and splintering in identification.

Young people generally operationalise a distinct difference in Irish identity between what they construct as rural Ireland against the Ireland, and Irish identity, of their everyday Dublin surroundings. The tension within Irish identity can be seen within the marked juxtapositions highlighted between how young people articulate their experience of sociality within Dublin when compared to the projection of sociality within traditional/rural Ireland, for instance. Neil, who has lived in a rural part of Ireland, spoke of how he felt Irishness is experienced 'Outside of the cities' as 'pretty much mono-ethnic stuff...down the country you're Catholic or you know you're nothing'. It is not simply a widespread understanding that religion might indeed matter more in rural Ireland than in Dublin but discussions of Rural Ireland are permeated by wider notions that it is a community space and that identity is fundamentally understood within mono-cultural terms and strongly framed by the identity suggested within the traditional paradigm. This compares to how Dublin is then understood as marked by difference, as in the words of respondents 'multicultural'. The construction of rural Ireland suggests that there are two clearly

understood versions of Ireland: one that is under the command of the traditional paradigm and the Ireland that young people live in which fundamentally is not.

However it is not only through the trope of rural Ireland that the effects of the traditional paradigm are evident. Young people can also symbolically project the traditional paradigm as something rooted in how a Generalised Other understands Irishness, so suggesting a tension in identification. Though particular *Symbols of Irishness* associated with the traditional paradigm - the *Irish language* or *Speaking the Irish language* for instance - may hold some personal meaning for young people the values are perceived as altogether more meaningful within the consciousness of the projected Generalised Other. Certainly symbolically, but also when articulating views towards Irishness, young people loosely project the traditional paradigm onto other people. This is the essential distinction in framing Irish identity as understood within the traditional paradigm; *its definitional ability can be seen as powerfully affecting others' views of Irish identity, not how young people may necessarily want to understand themselves as Irish.*

If there is one specific factor that can be seen as particularly militating against young people framing their Irishness within a traditional paradigm, it is their acute disassociation from the Catholic Church. They firmly reject any notion that religious markings are securely attached to Irish identity. Brennan (2001) rightly points out that the secularisation of Irish society has seen many young people rejecting religious beliefs. This rejection of religious beliefs impedes the formation of a sense of Irishness from within the parameters of the traditional paradigm. If we take it that an 'interchangeability or shorthand equation of Irish and Catholic' (O'Connell, 2001:73) was once the norm of being Irish, then this research definitively shows that young people do not express such understandings; some young people obviously see Ireland marked by a plurality of religions and others simply understand Irish identity as disassociated from any given religious identity.

### **11.1.2 Selectivity**

While a majority of young people may have identified with various symbolic constituents of the traditional paradigm, how that identification is managed leads away from fixing their own understanding of Irish identity within the parameters of that paradigm. Processes of modernity would seem to strongly manage what factors of identity are emphasised and what are not, but importantly also control how these factors of identity are felt to affect what it is to be Irish. There



is some appreciation 'that the past always figures selectively in our present and how it does so is always contingent on the changes of the present' (Puri, 2004:66). As such young people can identify with constituents of the traditional paradigm that are representative of Irish identity from 'the past' but not, following Giddens, as 'tradition lived in the traditional way' (1999:43). Young people do not allow themselves to be defined within the traditional paradigm. Young people can identify with selective elements from 'the past', as with Irish history, Gaelic sports and certainly symbolically with the *Catholic Church*, but identification seems firmly managed within diverse understandings of what these may say about Irish identity. What this suggests is that being Irish may be distinguished by these markers - both symbolically and practically - and though some young people do celebrate this distinction they show little personal enthusiasm for their cultural practice and less enthusiasm for bounding their own identity within the confines of the traditional paradigm. Both symbolic and vocal support can be offered, but the level of support is managed by not closing down or restricting identity to the traditional paradigm.

It should be emphasised that just because processes of modernisation - secularisation and de-traditionalisation for instance - are influencing young peoples' personal understandings of Irish identity this does not necessarily lead away from identifications with an Ireland either constructed from 'the past' or from factors of Irish identity that can be constructed as relating to 'the past'. Indeed when considering the Tra-modern below it will be seen just how important 'the past' is in framing Irishness. Young people certainly share identification with Irishness but they remain reluctant to privilege any historical sense over their own contemporary sense of Irishness.

Cronin highlights how the Irish language has, in recent years, 'flourished in the new broadcast media' and been reinvigorated not simply symbolically as a marking of Irish identity but practically where it 'has been dramatically reinvented in the Irish present in everything from post-level schooling to third-level Masters courses in computing and high finance' (2004:23). Some young people placed a particularly strong value upon the existence of the Irish language as embodying something more of Irishness than the English language; as something that was distinctively Irish. The emphasis upon the Irish language may have traditional overtones in certain cases, but even with those people who deeply valued the Irish language there is no sense that Ireland should be an exclusively Irish speaking society or that valuing the Irish language is connected with valuing rurality or Catholicism. In understanding why some young people fully identify with constituents of the traditional paradigm it must be appreciated that identification is

itself uneven:

Members of a nation have never shared the same experience and views perfectly; regardless of the rhetoric of national identity and imagined community; there have always been class, regional and ethnic divisions and conflicts (Komito, 2004:169).

We have seen in the course of the analysis presented here that young people do indeed engage very differently with identity. Class and gender, for instance, have been common themes explored in highlighting difference, and are discussed below (11.4).

### **11.1.3 Criticality**

Embracing certain factors within the traditional paradigm, like the Irish language, can historical ground identity and offer a sense of security for some young people. Nevertheless, that security must be understood as temporary and unstable, and fundamentally controlled by an acceptance that other influences and processes affect identity. Young people can negotiate the traditional paradigm through a 'reflexive project - a more or less continuous interrogation of the past, present and future' (Giddens, 1992:30). The manner in which young people appropriate meanings certainly implies that they are engaging in some type of reflexive project. The Irish language, for instance, can be emphasised in a situation where it helps to differentiate Irish identity from other national identities, but the English language can be emphasised when it allows for trans-national cultural exchanges.

Young peoples' selection process seems strongly affected by an enabled individual criticality and a heightened individuality towards identity. The factors associated with the traditional paradigm can be seen as quite contested - Irish folk music, the Irish language, the GAA, the Catholic Church or rurality. Indeed some factors can be seen to act as an Other for some young people in constructing contemporary Irishness. Young people employ a dynamic criticality towards questioning constituents of the traditional paradigm and its representativeness of Irish identity. Overall, orientations towards the traditional paradigm suggest that young people can employ a heightened individuality in the construction of identity. Individualisation is certainly a particular theme within contemporary identity construction which may allow the selective ability to emphasise specific constituents within Irishness as important in self-identification but of course also contest and stress others as personally irrelevant. Importantly,

the constituents of the traditional paradigm are not necessarily connected to any sense that this expresses *how I understand and identify myself with Irishness*. There is a general tolerance and managed acceptance towards any person that may find identity in the Irish language or Gaelic sports but this does not normally suggest that they then necessarily hold a more privileged sense of Irishness than those who consider Gaelic sports or the Irish language as entirely inconsequential to their Irish identity. People can and do support the achievements of English sports people, disparage the Irish language and look upon Gaelic sports as personally insignificant but this neither distances their own personal identification towards Irishness nor elevates anyone else's. Though on an abstract level young people may have essentialised rural Ireland as more Irish than in Dublin, on a relational level - between group members for instance - there is no sense that anyone holds a more privileged Irish identity than anyone else, even when some young people deeply valued the Irish language and were proficient or fluent in Irish.

The traditional paradigm continues to play a part in constructions of Irishness, and obviously some constituents are quite valued by some young people, however there is a widespread engagement marking this understanding as fractured and remote to *how I* and *how we* are Irish. The encompassing Traditional Paradigm does not address how young people personally understand and celebrate their Irishness. It will be seen in the following section that it is rather the modern paradigm that directly addresses greater self-identification and connective meaning in young peoples' understandings of what Irishness may mean.

## 11.2 Modern Paradigm

Smith accepted that there is a fracturing around various modernist understandings of the nation - between *Socio-economic*, *Sociocultural*, *Political*, *Ideological* and *Constructionist* - but that notwithstanding theoretical diversity, each approach shared in the core underlining 'belief in the inherently national, and nationalist, nature of modernity' (Smith, 2001:48). The modern paradigm of Irishness presented here and illustrated throughout this thesis is also fractured by different approaches - between Tra-modern, modern and inventive modern. Within the diversity of meanings there are however core factors shared across the approaches. The most evident sharing across different meanings of Irishness within the modern paradigm firstly relates to the notion that something has fundamentally changed in the fabric or constituents of Irish identity, a

position already emphasised in how young people negotiated the traditional paradigm. Young people readily accept the dominant discourse of a once hegemonic and commonly shared traditional identity that has been supplanted by a modern identity. Young people might not necessarily date changes as occurring in the 1960s (as does for instance Kirby, 1988:52-53). Their own comparative timeframe of when Irish society was traditional, when Ireland was 'mono-cultural', is found in the Ireland of the 1990s, 1980s or 1970s - but there is an underlining acceptance that what young people experience and consider as Irish identity is markedly different to what others - older people, rural people, an Irish person living fifty years ago or non-Irish people - can regard as Irish identity.

The second shared meaning relates to how processes of identity are experienced. Central to the modern paradigm is how young people employ an understanding of changing Irish identity related to placing their experience of contemporary Ireland, or specifically Dublin, within a boundary that emphasises *differing* identity influences and identity commitments. Young people can understand themselves as inundated with influences upon identity construction - family influences, national and trans-national influences - that can each make an impression upon both *who they are* individually and *who they are* as Irish people. Young people show an awareness of how different influences can affect identity and also some acceptance that different people around them, or different people in Ireland may also have had different influences and this might shape different perspectives on identity.

The third element which unites these various understandings, relates to how these influences are managed. Unsurprisingly, given the diversity of identity influences, young people essentially operationalise an individualised approach towards the negotiation of Irish identity that is deeply implicated in a de-traditionalised modern sociality. This individuality is present even when Irish identity is clearly understood and accepted, as is the case with the Tra-modern understanding. There is always a space allowed for individuality and individual differences within identity. Meanings of collective identity can be contested, some more so than others, but this allows young people with diverse backgrounds and experiences to continue to identify with Irishness, as Irishness can be individualised to meet individual demands. For Cronin the integration of Ireland into global processes has opened identity, and indeed all social processes, to individualisation, where 'No area of our culture has been untouched by this development' (2001:16). Such a radical redrawing of identity, as proposed by Cronin, obviously affects how

Irishness can be and is understood. Individualisation has lead, for Cronin, to a 'growing disconnectedness of people' that undermines a shared sensing of the nation.

The findings of my investigation indicate how young people approach Irish identity from multiple directions but there are remarkably few people who actually do not identify themselves as Irish. There remains a 'collective self' of Irish identity that holds meaning - however thinly or unevenly - for young people but this 'collective self' is unstable and opens identity to ever increasing influences. How these influences can be managed shall now be reviewed under three differing - though connected - understandings of Irish identity.

### **11.2.1 The Tra-modern conceptualisation**

Though young people are unquestionably distanced from relating their own sense of Irishness to the traditional paradigm they are undoubtedly extremely receptive to notions found within traditional Irishness. Chapter 6 highlighted how young peoples' most immediate engagement with Irish identity was through emphasising a *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness*. This approach certainly implies a deep sense of identification that connects with traditional and long-established notions that Irish identity displays values of sociability. Importantly these traditional notions can be pulled together to emphasise an understanding of Irish identity that is employed to support a definite shared meaning, and highly positive feeling, towards Irish identity on the part of young people. However though young people are implicated in actively appropriating values that have some traditional association these markers are understood and employed under relatively rigid conditions of selectivity.

Symbolically it can be appreciated how embedded particular traditional associations with Irishness are for young people and how they are also more evenly projected across a shared level of identification with a Generalised Other. For instance over three-quarters of young people identified with *Welcoming to Strangers*, *The craic*, *Friendliness/Helpfulness*, *Socially cooperative and helpful* and *St. Patrick's Day* with young people also placing over three-quarters of the Generalised Other as identifying with these markings. Crucially, while Irish identity appeared to be fractured within the traditional paradigm (differences between the self and the generalised other), Irish identity is now understood as more uniform and symbolically shared. Young people share with the projected Generalised Other an understanding of Irish identity contained within such symbolic representations as *Welcoming to Strangers* or *The craic*.

Drawing identity, which young people consistently do, within the *General Celebratory Understanding of Irishness* is so openly positive towards identification how indeed could anyone not identify with being Irish? There is of course significant value in emphasising such a characterisation of Irish identity. What national identity would not like to consider itself as viewed both nationally and internationally within a tolerant and inclusive framing of identity? If we take Brennan's (2001) reading of urban Ireland as atomised it is no doubt meaningful for young people to ground Irish identity in such positively and reassuringly shared terms of sociability. Indeed some young people are conscious of how constructing Irish identity through Tra-modern understandings makes identification with the Nation a considerably less complicated process than identification with the baggage and associations of identity under the traditional paradigm.

Positioning Irishness within a Tra-modern perspective is essentially accepted and often passes unchallenged, and so is the opposite of the traditional paradigm where its constituent meanings hardly ever went unchallenged. There is little doubt that when the meaning ascribed to Irishness is Tra-modern it is essentially seen as unproblematised and is perceived to lead to unquestionable social advantages. The common perception that being Irish is viewed as a positive international identity can of course lend itself to a sense of national esteem. Smith, in challenging the characterisation of a singular global culture, points out how transmitted culture is bounded by particular social contexts:

If cultures are historically specific and spatially limited, so are those images and symbols that have obtained a hold on human imagination... It is one thing to be able to package imagery and diffuse it through world-wide telecommunications networks. It is quite another to ensure that such images retain their power to move and inspire populations, who have for so long mirrored and crystallized the experience of historically separated social groups, whether classes or regions, religious congregations or ethnic communities (1990:178-179).

Smith is of course right about the power to set and control specific meaning in 'package imagery' across different societies, but what is significant in the Tra-modern conceptualisation is just how young people consistently projected some fixity to Irish identity which carries a very secured meaning even across very different societies.

Tra-modern understandings of Irishness are projected as essentially shared across one

global culture with the understanding that being Irish and Irish symbolisation ‘retain their power to move and inspire populations’ as others - both Irish and non-Irish people - know exactly how positively marked being Irish is. For instance, the overall thrust of any discussion about how Irishness might be considered internationally points towards a common perception that being Irish is, if anything, a definite advantage with this advantage underpinned by a global sharing that places Irishness securely within a Tra-modern conceptualisation. Tra-modern framings of Irish identity are seen to stand as remarkably unified, solid and accepted; it is not only *I, us* but also *them* who understand that being Irish is *deservedly* associated with Tra-modern markings. For young people, ‘we Irish’ have proved through our sociable practices that we deserve to be understood as a group that can and should be approached from the perspective of Tra-modern understandings.

It is not simply that many young people understand their most direct sense of Irish identity through essentially contemporising historical and traditional themes towards Irishness, and then advancing these as a fore-grounded explanation of contemporary Irish identity, but importantly many young people also emphasised this as their *naturalised* understanding of Irishness. There is a remarkable level of support on the part of young people towards Irish identity framed as Tra-modern that almost continuously pulls young peoples’ sense of Irishness into a Tra-modern conceptualisation. For instance, underpinning discussions of America and Americans was the underlying comparison that Irish people are essentially more grounded than Americans and/or how the Irish are generally liked internationally because they have a different and positive sociability when compared to what they described as the internationally disliked and ill-behaved English.

The Tra-modern conceptualisation not only promotes a sense of overlapping shared-ness towards Irish identity but importantly it can situate Irish identity beyond critique. Young people can react very defensively to challenges to Tra-modern identity and can often essentially dismiss, through employing individualisation, the distance between the practice of identity implied within a Tra-modern conceptualisation and why it may not necessarily be realised or met by some people. For instance regarding why some people in Ireland may not necessarily be friendly, helpful, welcoming or good fun was generally individualised; it is the individual’s personality that was not friendly, helpful, welcoming or good fun and not the fault of how *we*, in general, see ourselves because *we*, in general, see ourselves as friendly, helpful, welcoming and good fun.

Few people contested Irish identity when understood through Tra-modern understandings and few people could connect how this sense of sociable Irishness could co-exist along with negative conceptualisations of other individuals, groups or nations. In the course of the research it transpired that some characterisations of America and Americans were decidedly unfriendly, as were some characterisations of immigrants. However though some young people may not necessarily connect their Tra-modern understanding of Irishness with their own actual social practices it can also be seen that some young people did, and were adamant in addressing what they felt were problems in Ireland through re-asserting Tra-modern values. For example some young people showed a concern with racism and some emphasised values associated with the past - being friendly, helpful and welcoming - as values that could help to challenge racism in Irish society.

Though the Tra-modern characterisation may appear to lack the substantive identity constituents of the Traditional Paradigm it is nonetheless a strong influence upon identity construction. It is the most immediate meaning young people express towards Irish identity and it is certainly how young people would like to see themselves as Irish people. It is viewed as a shared understanding towards Irish identity, and importantly not just shared by Irish people but generally projected as being fixed in the imagination of non-Irish people as well. It is a unifying approach allowing everyone to understand and embrace the underlying values of Irishness. It can also be seen as acting for some as a point to move Irishness forwards where some of the constituents can be emphasised in order to create a *more welcoming* and *more friendly* Ireland, particularly for immigrants. Unlike the tenets of the traditional paradigm the Tra-modern paradigm is very much a welcomed and embraced understanding of Irishness. Understanding Irish identity through a Tra-modern frame obviously goes some way in explaining the overwhelming sense of self-identification towards Irishness expressed by young people. However it is not the only understanding of Irish identity.

### **11.2.2 Modern Irish Identity**

Young people can deal with complexities of identity by recognising, and selectively celebrating, particular modern values or processes identified as constitutive of contemporary Irish society and identity. There is a relational sense of Irishness with themes of the modern, such as a space for contestation, individuality and accepted differences in identity. As this approach



promotes a contestation of identity there is typically an accepted freedom for individual negotiation and interpretation of meanings, so permitting Irishness to be understood from a range of differing perspectives that allows a variety of differing identifications towards Irishness.

Positing Irishness from various modern viewpoints shows how effectively the discourse surrounding the modernisation of Irishness actually is. Young people embrace themes of the modern, not only in a materialist sense but also in how it affects identity itself. When young people are challenged to reflect upon identity there is some understanding on their part of a social environment in which both Irish and self-identity are not permanently ascribed and fixed but rather continuously developing under the impulse of many differing influences; *We now live in a time of computers, multi-channel television, plurality, branding, opportunities, mobility, individuality, wealth, cars, choice, immigration and celebrity culture and this must change who we are as Irish people and must change who I am.* Regarding the overall theme of Irish identity it is obvious that many young people only understand themselves as *modern* Irish people living in a *Modern Ireland*.

It is not only how young people see contemporary Ireland as essentially different to the Ireland that parents - or other people - may have grown up in or known but from the perspective of young people it must be fundamentally expected that because Irish society has changed, and because what can constitute identity is drawn from assorted and conflicting sources, there has to be some transformations within the contours of Irish identity itself. Irish identity is not then rigidly fixed and what comprises Irishness can and is seen as changeable. There are a variety of overlapping elements which can be seen to give shape to the Modern Irish approach; such as notions of Otherness, a tolerance towards individuality alongside a receptivity towards new experiences, the pull of Irishness itself and general processes of modernity. By looking at *Otherness, Difference and Openness*, we shall review how these overlapping elements give some shape to identity.

### **11.2.2.1 Othernesss**

Feelings and expressions of Otherness can be seen to affect how young people understand themselves as both individuals and as Irish people. In the Modern Irish approach a notable Other is found in the projected notions underlining traditional Ireland and Irishness - similarity, conformity and restriction. There is an over-riding sense that how Irishness was experienced -

the time frame generally appears to be an Ireland that parents might have grown up in or known - was one where Irish identity was more evenly distributed and commonly shared but importantly, an identity that was limited and limiting. How Ireland was in the past is often presented as very much a closed insular society. Generally the picture of contemporary Irish sociality, drawn by young people, is laced with positive notions of progress and choice which can be directly compared to how Irishness was/is traditionally experienced. This can be seen most obviously in how young people constructed clear distinctions between the projected backwardness of rural Ireland against the felt progressiveness of their own urban modern Ireland/Dublin settings. The Modern Irish approach is analytically questioning of how Irishness may have been understood in the past and places the Ireland in which young people now live as radically different to any mono-culturally constructed past Irishness.

Though this is clearly seen in the construction of rural Ireland - and how it could be layered with values from the past continuing to affect the present - this process of distinguishing how Irishness may be understood and experienced is evident from young peoples' consideration of themes such as the Irish language and religion. For instance regarding religion young people not only de-privileged Catholicism from Irish identity but also suggested themselves to be essentially marked by a secularised identity and a level of tolerance towards all faiths or none. Certainly attitudes towards religion imply some modern secular code that disassociates any privileged sense that Catholicism connects favourably with contemporary Irish identity.

#### **11.2.2.2 Difference within Irishness**

Modern Irish identity can emphasise differences within Irish identity. These differences can be individual or sectional, but they are differences seen as both brought about and continuing through the modernisation of Irish society. Sectional differences, for instance, can be seen in the notion that being Irish in Northern Ireland might be related to being a Catholic whilst in Dublin no such qualification would seem to exist. It certainly speaks of an ability to accept difference in Irishness when in one place Irish *is* Catholic and in another it is not. An accepted understanding within the modern Irish approach is that Irishness has opened up beyond any implied limitation on Irishness that may speak of a real permanence of identity. What fundamentally colours modern Irish understandings is not only the acceptance of many differing identity sites but how these various sites are managed within both the construction of self and Irish identity. Even

powerful identity formative sites that have traditionally helped socialise a nationalised identity – such as the school or the family - can only have a limited impact when placed in the context that there exists other very powerful identity formation sites - peer groups for instance or multi-various media sources - that also impact upon young peoples' sense of themselves. Young people have a range of alternatives from which to draw in defining themselves and their sense of Irishness. The availability of such alternatives challenges the limitations set by traditional socialisation.

### **11.2.2.3 Openness**

An openness towards identity can be seen to work in many different ways from the eagerness to travel and experience other cultures to the willingness to learn about different cultures at school. Though young people may be comfortable with fixing Irishness to Tra-modern values they are decidedly uncomfortable with fixing Irishness to anything that imposes conformity on who they themselves are. Young people may have accepted particular markers of Irish identity but there is generally an underlying current which accepts that individuals differ and individual interpretations of meaning differ. There is some recognition that identity is formed from many influences - Irish and non-Irish, the media, friends, schools or where people live, individual lifestyles and so on - and this is joined with a heavy emphasis upon individual negotiation of identity. There is obviously some shared-ness of Irish identity on the part of young people but there is also space for individual complexities. This allows room for approaching Irish identity from many different angles, which young people clearly do.

Where Irish identity of the past was once limited and inward looking the underlying view of the modern approach is the acceptance that identity is now made by people themselves drawing on various influences. Irishness was frequently understood and appreciated in highly individualised ways - from celebrating to contesting the Irish language, to praising feelings of friendliness or tolerance to emphasising how materialist Ireland is while both rejecting and embracing this materialism. Though young people can draw Irish identity from a number of different perspectives, this sense of difference seems held, shared and somewhat privileged by youth.

There is evidence that an understanding of modern Irish identity as experienced in Dublin is more or less consistently shared across Dublin, in a similar way that Irish identity in rural

Ireland is consistently and evenly shared. Furthermore, this consistency is typically generational as young people see other young people sharing their concerns and understandings. However, when the issue of parents or the generalised Other is considered, there are generational fissures in meanings that place all young people in Dublin as modern and questioning of how modern everyone else is. Of course this is seen with religion but it also affects views towards immigrants - young people generally see themselves as more tolerant than the generalised Other. Young people certainly like to see themselves as more modern and progressive than older people with this more modern outlook articulated in terms of to a sense of openness, freedom, individuality and an active construction of identity, as noted in Chapter 4.

Modern Irish identity is no doubt an accommodation towards the changes, which have occurred, and that are proceeding in Irish society. This approach allows young people to agree to constitutively value Irish identity differently but to also continue to share identification with Irish identity. Though of course there might not be widespread agreement on what constitutes Irish identity - it is readily seen as contested and contestable - there is agreement that the diversity of meanings can be accommodated somehow within Irish identity. Even when some young people reject elements of Irish identity that other people value, they can continue to self-identify with Irishness but on their own selective terms. This can be seen as a response to the complexity of identity itself, particularly trying to pack Irish identity into something understandable that young people can identify with. Irish identity can be and is typically understood as involving many differing interpretations, some of which young people identify with and some of which they can contest as personally unimportant and personally meaningless.

When compared to the ideal-type Irishness of the Traditional Paradigm - that partially helped fuel both a rebellion and a national liberation struggle - it is evident how radically the bonds, or Anderson's 'style' of imagining the nation have altered. There are various ways to imagine the Nation and the constitutive bonds that underpin a sense of shared recognition may have become more individualised but have also become more accommodating to the changing conditions of contemporary Ireland. Maintaining Irishness as meaningful requires young people to accept differences within being Irish that draw parameters around Irish identity as shifting and individually accommodating. Without these shifting parameters the overwhelming enthusiasm of self-identification towards Irishness would be thoroughly undermined. When so many proposed constituents of Irishness are thoroughly contested there has to be a way to remain Irish while

importantly remaining oneself. The Modern approach allows this as Irishness is drawn within particular processes - individuality, open-ness, variety - that cannot fix Irishness to rigid exclusionary borders that any one person could find troublesome. There are a variety of evident individualised constituents that can each comprise Irishness and valuing multiculturalism does not then imply one cannot deeply value the Irish language or prize Gaelic sports or embrace a sense of individuality while still, importantly, retaining identification with Irishness.

### 11.2.3 Inventive Modern Irish

A feature of living in modernity is how understandings towards self and collective identity can and importantly do change. The inventive modern approach towards Irish identity powerfully embeds notions of identity change. This has the effect of changing both how Irishness *was* understood and how Irishness *is* understood. There is a shared consensus among young people that Irish identity is constitutively changed from something understood as traditional to something understood fundamentally as modern, but there is also some appreciation that Irish identity continues to and will undergo further change. Though a sense of change is experienced throughout all modern understandings it is how foregrounded and managed the notion of change is within the consciousness of young people which helps to distinguish this particular understanding of Irishness from others; *identity change is taken as a natural social practice that will affect what it means to be Irish*. The expectation and response towards change is then placed as completely central to how young people experience who they are as both individuals and as Irish people.

How notions of change can and have affected Irish identity can be seen not simply in the different symbolic engagements between young people and a Generalised Other but more fundamentally in how young people describe Irish identity. For instance young peoples' positioning of Britain/Britishness, the foremost historical Other of Irishness, speaks of a radical change in conceptualising Irishness from what Irishness once was. Though Britishness can still play a part in constructing Irishness, particularly for others, it is notable how little influence Britishness has on young peoples' own understandings of Irishness. Young people typically want to move history on - not to overly dwell upon the past and past historical relationships - because Ireland has moved on. As recent as 1984 - a year some of the sample would have been born in - Deane suggested to a Dublin audience that 'Irishness is the quality by which we want to display

our non-Britishness - or our anti-Britishness... The idea of what is British continues to govern the idea of what is Irish' (1984:90). Though young people perceptively highlight how Britishness can be an Other for some people in constructing a sense of Irishness, and there is certainly evidence that the behaviour of some English soccer supporters or English tourists still reinforces a sense of their difference from Irishness for some young people, it cannot be claimed that there is any widespread feeling of anti-Britishness on the part of young people. Instead, if anything, there is often something of a sympathetic shared bond of identity felt with people in Britain. How Britain or Britishness can be so radically displaced as an immediate Other to Irishness speaks of how radically changed Irish identity itself is, at least for young people.

The expectation of identity change on the part of young people has the effect of positioning identity as fundamentally opened and fluid. Under the inventive modern approach there is not necessarily any commonly secured and widespread points of shared meaning given to identity, as for instance the Tra-modern approach strongly suggests. Rather what constitutes Irishness can be seen as temporary as there is a negotiated individual process, which allows Irishness to be constantly, redrawn within changed and changing circumstances. This approach individualises Irishness allowing young people to individually engage in a constant and on-going invention and re-invention of Irish identity that meets particular and immediate demands when addressing Irish identity. For instance one of the demands of Irishness is essentially never to step outside positive self-identification, and to allow this self-identification, young people construct Irishness on fundamentally their own mobile and changeable terms. The only occasions when young people distanced themselves from Irishness was when suggestions were made which fixed Irishness to something individual with which young people could not identify such as religion or proficiency in the Irish language.

There is definite confusion over what Irishness means on a collective level, because quite understandably young people recognise that people have differing levels of identifications and experiences, but the inventive modern approach ensures Irish identity by allowing the individual to draw Irishness around their own changing needs. As this approach individualises Irishness, but within the demands of continuing self-identification, it encourages a fluidity towards identity where diverse influences and meanings can be individually inscribed in Irishness and so allowing young people to operationalise radically different understandings towards Irishness at different times. Markers of Irishness are treated with a flexibility that can continually move identifications

in different directions making it impossible to lock Irishness into definite permanent meanings. That Irishness can be drawn from radically different perspectives - even by the same person - de-stabilises notions of commonly shared secure meanings towards Irishness.

Though all modern approaches share and accept a space for individually negotiating identity, under the inventive approach this individuality is of a form that releases Irish identity from any stability and allows young people to move around and continuously adjust understandings of Irishness, so constantly redrawing what it is to be Irish. The inventive approach is distinguished by the intensity of individually negotiating Irishness and also by an appreciable inability to securely ground Irishness in a sense of widespread shared values. Rather, what can be seen, is that Irishness is grounded in adjusting individual values and meanings. When above it was shown that young people approach and celebrate themselves as modern - implying particular secured values - now there is an understanding that shared identity is only ever momentarily agreed, and agreed primarily on an individual level. What can be seen is how young people search for an internally agreed position on Irishness but as different contexts and understandings arise there is then a movement towards finding another agreed position that can accommodate change. Though this approach de-stabilises ideas of a powerfully shared conceptualisation towards Irish identity what it allows is a receptivity and adaptability to engage with change and what change may mean to Irishness.

Diarmuid Ó Giolláin writes that 'We can expect new symbols of Irish identity to appear as we participate in an unprecedented global age' (1997:40). The *Celtic Tiger* and *Multiculturalism* are principally 'new symbols' and it can certainly be seen that young people can personally value these newer *Symbols of Irishness* even though neither of these would register a great deal of identification in the mid to late 1980s when the sample were born<sup>4</sup>. Though young people might not like to see themselves attached to the materialism associated with the years of the Celtic Tiger and though what is implied within the symbolic conception of *Multiculturalism* can be contested, it can be appreciated that young people do find identification in these newer symbols and certainly notions of multiculturalism can be seen as making some impact on young peoples' understanding of Irishness itself. The discussion on multiculturalism can be seen as addressing and challenging the very foundation of a mono-culturally shared Irish sociality. It was shown in chapter 8 that views towards multiculturalism were mixed but a definite positivism was frequently articulated about the benefits of cultural difference. The

consideration of immigrants points not only towards the juxtaposition between the idea of a mono-culturally fixed Irish identity against a changed contemporary multicultural Dublin/Ireland but shows how young people can extend this notion out, with many young people displaying little or no difficulty in accepting Irish born children of immigrants as fellow Irish people.

However though the discussion on multiculturalism suggests some receptiveness to changing conceptions of Irishness young people can also be resistant to change even regarding 'new symbols of Irish identity'. Though the inventive modern Irish approach can allow multiple individual identifications there is also a fear that what may be invented as Irish identity may be outside the compass of how some young people want to understand Irish identity. It is not simply how young people often expressed concerns over commercialisation and its implied ability to eradicate cultural differences but attempts at symbolising a *New Ireland* can also be challenged.

As the inventive modern approach allows individuals to effortlessly move across meanings of Irishness without provoking questions of consistency or necessarily disrupting feelings of self-identifications towards being Irish, this begs the question of what young people are identifying with in Irishness and what meanings regarding Irishness can then be inferred. For example while a majority of young people might symbolically value *Multiculturalism*, over one-third of the cohort who valued *Multiculturalism* would not welcome their school teaching about other cultures. Though there may be some shared identification with specific 'new symbols of Irish identity' how identity is then experienced allows for a fluid individualised construction of Irish identity from multiple overlapping, sometimes conflicting and contesting viewpoints. There is rarely any sense of contradiction or questioning between celebrating one form of implied meanings of Irishness against articulating another. For instance the most common complaint against contemporary Ireland related to racism. Young people could oppose racism in Irish society but some were more than able to operate within a rigid racialising frame that effortlessly racialised others and themselves.

The inventive modern is the most individualised modern approach towards identity. As social flux is taken as a given it allows a seamless approach that adapts Irishness to ongoing change and context. It is dependent on a completely mobile sense of Irishness that can be drawn from the past, the present or the future but which is always individually negotiated. This individual negotiation allows shared and fixed meanings to essentially slide away from Irishness as Irishness is increasingly individually defined, and then further re-defined. It can certainly be



accommodating towards change but it can also be seen as limiting and contradictory. It can be contradictory because it is seamless - the same person can imply historical markings are not important when constructing Irishness but then, without contradiction, go on to emphasise historical markings. This can analytically limit understandings of Irishness to what the individual thinks and not to any broader social relation of mutual recognition or what social powers may be defining mutual recognition. Though the inventive approach is individualising there remains some underlining sense of Irishness. However the following section will highlight that any underlining common sensing of Irishness is becoming increasingly difficult to locate.

### 11.3 Post-modernising Paradigm

The paradigms so far considered each imply some shared meanings that young people selectively employ and understand, be it positively or negatively, in shaping views towards Irishness. However the suggestion of a post-modern paradigm implies the ability to undermine and disrupt any felt sense of shared understanding, even possibly, at the extreme, turning Irishness into *Irish-mess* where the meanings of identity are essentially disjointed, unknowable and extremely unstable. How the bonds assumed within the nation may have radically altered by any post-modernisation is suggested by Baudrillard when writing of how 'no narrative', such as that supplied by the nation, 'can come to metaphorize our presence; no transcendence can play a role in our definition' (1988:51). Some young people explicitly acknowledge this view towards identity. Some young people seem to understand their identity in explicitly post-national terms which implies some acceptance that the 'narrative' of the nation has disappeared or is certainly not as compelling for these young people as it is with other young people. However these expressions of post-nationality, which challenge the importance and meaning of Irish identity, are exceptional when placed against the overwhelming sense of self-identification towards Irishness offered by virtually all participating young people. Though one cannot deduce any widespread radical post-national current, there is certainly grounds for suggesting some process of post-modernising identity that makes it extremely difficult to isolate any consistent and unwavering shared meanings towards Irish identity.

Though post-modernity is unquestionably conceptually disputed I shall offer an understanding of it as associated with the disintegration of socially established and determining

meanings towards identity where, as such, the ‘culture of meaning is collapsing’ (Baudrillard, 1996:17), or to be more specific; *the culture of shared collective meaning is collapsing*. There are two interconnected approaches that shall be concentrated upon that indicate this theme. One approach suggests that there is now nothing of any substantive value or meaning within conceptualisations of contemporary Irish identity. In Chapter 1 I noted how some commentators construed the meanings of contemporary Irish identity as remarkably thin, and in many ways dismissed the ability of the nation to engender intense emotions of shared identification, belonging or action. The other approach emphasises the impossibility of any sense of commonly shared meanings towards Irish identity as the constituents of identity are individually drawn from divergent, often competing and conflicting, sources. This second approach, which like the first approach leads to identifications becoming thoroughly individualised, suggests that it is not any lack of meanings that may undermine a shared sense of Irish identity but rather an overabundance of meanings; ‘We are not... in danger of lacking meaning; quite to the contrary, we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us’ (Baudrillard, 1988:63). This second approach requires something of a reading between the lines of Irish identifications to be understood. It is not as such that young people hold no meaning in Irish identity. Rather it is because Irishness has been utterly opened to include multifarious potential approaches towards identifications and meanings that young people cannot, outside of their own individual interpretation of what Irishness may personally mean, make any common reading of what it is to be Irish.

In the context of the discourse of Irish identity the first approach can be considered both hegemonic in shaping understandings of how post-modernity might be altering notions of Irish identity and as a view that is influential in placing contemporary conceptions of Irishness. Features of post-modernity can be seen as shared across diverse views towards identity. For instance both Jim Mac Laughlin and John Waters would seem to each share the view that Irish identity is essentially post-modern. Mac Laughlin is direct in stating that if the sense of the nation is weakening, and he believes it is, it is because ‘we live in an age of postmodern scepticism’ (2001:4). This ‘scepticism’ can position peoples’ sensing of Irishness as ‘more attached to symbols and brand names than to any real places or any organic traditions’ (Mac Laughlin, 1997:6). Equally for Waters, the prioritising of materialism and changing social values places Irish society in a seemingly post-modern space where ‘nobody is sure of the meaning of anything’ (1997:147). Both authors imply a deep uncertainty in *who I am* and a particular

uncertainty towards *who we are*. This uncertainty towards identity can be seen in young people's responses as detailed in the foregoing analysis. For young people there is some understanding that 'the only certainty', about how Irishness can be understood, 'is continuing uncertainty' (Crook et al. 1992:3).

Featherstone writes of how post-modernity is a challenge to any symbolic order in destabilising 'a strict symbolic hierarchy' by making 'the context' fundamental to individual interpretation (1990:2). It has been demonstrated that the traditional paradigm affords young people the opportunity to apply notions of idealised Irishness, with 'a strict symbolic hierarchy', against which to articulate their own felt understandings of Irishness. Though young people overwhelmingly identify with Irishness, so suggesting some certainty, if we consider young peoples' negotiation of the various *Symbols of Irishness*, particularly when placed against the values attached to the generalised Other, there is an implicit understanding of the fracturing of shared understandings in how Irishness is symbolically represented. Though it has been shown how factors like class and gender affect symbolic identification the more fundamental challenge against any 'strict symbolic hierarchy' would seem generally generational; where young people share more in common, irrespective of class or gender, than they necessarily project onto a generalised Other.

Though certain symbols are quite readily embraced by young people and regarded as more shared in identification - the various Tra-modern symbolic associations for instance, or *Learning/understanding Irish history* - it can be appreciated how the established symbolic hierarchy is under stress. For instance more young people symbolically identified with *Multiculturalism* than with other historic symbols like the GAA, *Speaking the Irish language* or *Irish folk music*. Indeed, young people explicitly highlight how certain *Symbols of Irishness* are *Not Important* in shaping their own understanding of Irishness. For instance over one-third of the sample listed the GAA, U2, the *Celtic Tiger*, *Catholic Church*, *Speaking the Irish language*, *Classic Irish literature (e.g. Joyce)* and *Irish folk music* as *Not Important* for their own sense of Irishness. The hold particular *Symbols of Irishness* have upon young people, as against the projected hold upon the Generalised Other, is limited and challenges a sense of shared symbolic values in Irish identity.

If there is a symbolic hierarchy that once privileged or attempted to reproduce symbolic privilege towards such notions as the GAA, the *Irish language*, *Catholic Church* or *The*

*government*, it is being somewhat dissolved by young people themselves. However, there is still obviously some hierarchy working in prioritising certain values. It is noteworthy that the majority of young people sampled offered self-identification towards *all* the listed *Symbols of Irishness*, with the exceptions of *Riverdance*, *Intolerance*, *Repression* and *Violent*. Yet the differential in values, and the interplay between these values, is highly suggestive that values are changing and that on some level the symbolic structure of Irishness may be moving towards an identity that is quite flexible to the demands of contemporary Dublin, as an accommodation towards individual difference for instance. What also speaks of post-modernising influence for some young people is the explicit suggestions regarding the meanings of Irish identity and just how deeply contested meanings towards Irishness actually are.

### 11.3.1 Contesting Irishness

The contestation of meanings has already been seen within the other two paradigms. Though very few suggestions of Irish identity can escape without some contestation of meanings it is how uneven identifications and meanings towards Irishness are that suggests a theme of post-modernisation. The uneven symbolic identification is obviously seen above and how the Irish language or religion can be contested has also been considered. Even the fundamental notion of what makes a person Irish can be seen as contested and implies an evident ‘crisis of representation’ (Bertens, 1995:11) towards Irishness. Young people’s responses to the question of what constitutes Irishness suggests that there is something essentially different and contested about what makes, or can make, a person Irish or *real* Irish. This questioning of the real was also seen in how young people engaged with traditional/rural Ireland, which for some young people was the *real Ireland* though it did not represent their own sense of Irishness. Rather obviously young people do not evenly share understandings towards Irish identity.

What is seen throughout this project is that young people can differ in positioning identity and a noted stress upon negotiating identity is individualisation, already encountered within the modern paradigm, which can most certainly be seen to affect identification. Jill’s comment speaks for how many young people no doubt understand identity and personal experience, where ‘the way someone perceives a certain country isn’t the way you’re going to... everyone’s going to think different things about different places’. This opening of individual space allows young people to ‘think different things’ about Irishness when in contextually ‘different places’.

Irishness seems increasingly dependent upon individualised interpretations that step outside any established reading of Irish identity. Though young people often reach to the Tra-modern values as their most immediate understanding of identity, when these values are questioned a far more complex and individualised understanding of identity emerges.

### **11.3.2 Individualising Irishness**

Baudrillard identifies an 'equiprobability' (1990:17) where meaning is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Events may be read as meaningful and important but also as equally meaningless and unimportant. Something of 'the equiprobability' of Irishness is readily apparent in the diversity of meanings attributed to Irish identity by young people themselves. It can be understood as showing pride in where one is from or celebrating the achievements of some Irish people; in remembering history or forgetting history; in being tolerant and anti-racist while also describing Irishness using racialised or intolerant terms. Young people approached the meanings of Irishness from multiple directions and though some meanings and markings are more popular than others - the notion of friendliness is a more popular understanding of identity than accents or the idea of Irish neutrality - young people can and do situate Irish identity in a variety of different and conflicting ways. Young people actively move across meanings towards identity so making it difficult to suggest any core meaning or essence towards Irish identity.

How young people move across meanings, patently evident in the inventive modern approach above, suggests temporality and constantly shifting identifications dependent upon Jill's contextually 'different places'. When the inventive approach continues to work firmly within varied and changeable identifications towards Irishness the post-modern is a movement beyond Irishness in accepting an inability to collectively share identity. This suggests 'a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak' (Weedon, 1987:33). This allows young people to both remove any sense of shared essence to Irish identity and be selective and changeable in what marks Irishness. The analysis of media consumption showed American popular culture as hegemonic with young people but this didn't preclude America and Americans from being positioned as negative. Yet many young people who had been to America - an experience that for some has shaped their own sense of Irishness - would go again and could share some cultural empathy with America; importantly America was the country most young people would actually

like to live in.

How the post-modern differs from the inventive modern can be seen in how post-modern understandings privatize experience by ruling notions of collectively shared identity out of the definition because ‘everyone’s going to think different’. Young people make allowances for people ‘think[ing] different’. Ingles writes of how from the 1960s ‘liberal individualism’ came to increasingly dominate social outlooks in Ireland (2003:137). For Ingles ‘liberal individualism’ has a post-modern quality in that it regards values and beliefs as relative: “right and wrong for some people might not be right and wrong for others” (2003:138). Certainly some young peoples’ engagement with the theme of Irish identity suggests some vagueness about positioning Irishness and indeed suggests an impossibility in even locating explicitly understood common understandings towards Irish identity which might be collapsed as shared and consistently ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ approaches. It is not simply the ability to situate Irishness differently under different contexts but importantly what questions mutual recognition raises of post-modernising Irishness.

Outside the presentation of Traditional Ireland, young people do not equally share in any clear-sighted picture of the Nation. There is very little sense that the majority of young people understand themselves in nationalist terms, and young people rarely articulate any views or meanings towards Irish identity that could be easily regarded as expressive of what one respondent called ‘rampant nationalism’. Ignatieff (1998) feels that nationalism promotes a homogenising sense of identity where people both see themselves as belonging and understood more so by people sharing a similar national identity but nationalism equally connects to the exclusion of people not sharing that identity. Young peoples’ receptivity towards multiculturalism, their openness towards having or forming friendships with non-Irish born people or their concerns with racism, each point away from seeing the Nation in overtly nationalistic terms.

If we accept Ignatieff’s positioning of nationalism as rejecting ‘multiple belonging’ (1998:46) then how some young people understand themselves - as also European or as cosmopolitan - would suggest there is little space for ‘rampant nationalism’. Even taking people who de-identified with Irishness it was not in the context that Irish identity could not accommodate who they understood themselves to be but was far more that they understood themselves as another national grouping. Gaye Shortland, in addressing *Being Irish*, has written of her secondary schooling experience and how her name ‘made me identity-conscious... gave

me an uncomfortable sense of not quite belonging' (2000:264). Shortland's 'flaw' was her great-grandfather who was an English Protestant, who may have converted to Catholicism, but through the essentialism of Gaelic identity maintained a marker of the Other for Shortland in her West Cork upbringing. Though nearly a quarter of the questionnaire sample had either not been born in Ireland or more commonly had at least one non-Irish born parent, there was very little sense that these young people felt a 'flaw' in understanding themselves as Irish or felt any 'uncomfortable sense of not quite belonging'. There is no doubt that a change has occurred in that the notion of Irishness and crucially who qualifies or belongs as Irish has become less fixed and more elastic.

The mobilising power of the Nation and nationalism has unquestionably changed. Positive and widespread feelings of Irishness can be easily mobilised on sporting occasions but there is little sense that outside of sporting occasions there could be comparable grounds for the mobilisation of Irishness. Crook *et al.* write of how 'the nation is disappearing as the significant political community' (1992:132) and indeed when issues around any 'political community' were expressed they could just as easily be trans-national as well as national concerns. What clearly brings out the sense of a divided national political community are attitudes towards Northern Ireland. Ireland and Irish identity have essentially become legitimised as bounded within the Republic of Ireland and what was once the hegemonic approach towards the illegitimacy of partition has certainly altered. Given young peoples' strong symbolic identification towards *Learning/understanding Irish history* it is rather remarkable that events that may or have happened in Northern Ireland do not have a great deal of hold upon the national imagination of young people. This bounding of Irishness to the Republic of Ireland speaks of an acceptance that whatever Irishness *is* - and of course this *is* is widely contested - it is represented more within rather than outside the Republic of Ireland.

The bonds of mutual recognition that tie a nation together have become pliable. The widespread sense of the nation, articulated by young people, still indicates a certain differentiation but, as has been shown, it operates on a highly selective and changeable basis. Though young people do not generally go to the extreme of post-modernity, in for instance suggesting that the narrative of the nation has no meaning or hold over who they are, it can certainly be seen that what can be implied by the narrative of the nation differs between people. The meanings implied by Irishness have unquestionably altered. It is certainly difficult to suggest

any shared essence towards Irishness which young people would commonly and consistently hold, and it is difficult to imagine the contemporary mobilising power of the nation as comparable to the Ireland of the immediate post-Independence period. Irish identity is still obviously there for young people but it is in the background, not necessarily the foreground, of who they are.

## 11.4 Conclusion

Anthony Smith highlights the productive quality of identity when asserting that ‘modern national identities are habitually reinterpreted by successive generations’ (2001:146). Reflecting on this research it can be appreciated how young people themselves actively engage in interpreting, and frequently reinterpreting, the meanings of Irishness. Quite clearly young people can hold different notions towards Irishness and maintaining any fixed conceptualization is severely challenged when understandings of identity readily change to suit contextual demands. However, though it has been repeatedly emphasized that young people negotiate identity by persistently moving around the boundaries of meanings, we cannot lose sight of the fact that young people clearly operate within notions of meaning and identification towards Irishness.

It is important to emphasize that the inconsistency in the meanings attributed to Irishness allows young people not to position Irishness as meaning nothing, but rather, allows young people to draw Irishness as meaning different things at different times. Young people repeatedly show they are receptive to identifying with Irishness. They are comfortable conforming with the majority of people in Ireland in willingly identifying with Irishness. However it is clear that outside of the Tra-modern understanding of Irishness young people generally struggled to maintain any clear-sighted and consistent picture of Irish identity. Young people certainly face a challenge in approaching Irishness outside the comfort zone of Tra-modern Irishness, but just because there can be a vagueness positioning Irishness, we should most certainly not assume that this vagueness somehow indicates that Irish identity is becoming irrelevant in some type of post-modern and post-national, hyper-globalized world.

What this research highlights is that even though Irish society and Irishness is becoming more individualised we can still point towards how collective markers and collective experience – not only *national but also class and gender* - continue to play their parts in constructing Irishness and constructing the self. Young people obviously approach self and national identity



from individualized viewpoints but the imprint of some shared views is readily apparent. For instance something of a shared class characteristic is evident in the negative othering of immigrants by some working class people. Considering that this othering was largely shaped through lived economic experiences (competing directly with immigrants for jobs) it is not surprising that the middle class sample (who are not directly competing with immigrants) exhibited no such tendency. Similarly, middle class people often shared in and consistently imagined rural Ireland as the Real Ireland. Though this view was expressed by some working class people, it was predominantly a middle class viewpoint.

Equally, the effects of gendering are also evident in the study findings. Unsurprising young men invested sports with a higher emotional and symbolic value than did young women. Young males could also employ language towards immigrants and the possible effects of immigration – notions of protection for instance – that suggested a masculine understanding or standpoint towards the world. Similarly, young females could distinguish their behaviour from that of young males. Young females demonstrated an ability to identify with more Symbols of Irishness than did young males and they were much more likely than young males to employ a language of inclusions and tolerance. The research shows that though people strive to individually negotiate identity the particular social structures of class and gender – and no doubt also urban and secular – help to shape young people's worldviews.

Young people can question who they are, and in this they can be seen as reflecting an established trend in Irish society generally. In the past 10 years, for instance, we can identify a relatively high level of popular questioning and interrogation of notions of Irishness. For instance there have been numerous publications – some best sellers - relating either directly or indirectly to the theme of Irish identity. A selective listing of works from 2000 onwards could include David McWillaims (2005) *The Pope's Children*; Des Geraghty (2007) *40 Shades of Green*; Tom Inglis's (2003, 2008) *Truth, Power and Lies or Global Ireland*; Keohane and Kuhling (2004, 2007), *Collision Culture or Cosmopolitan Ireland*, R.F. Foster (2001, 2008) *The Irish Story or Luck and the Irish* or Michael O'Connell (2001) *Changed Utterly*. This is in no way an exhaustive list but simply shows the topicality of the issue of Irishness among the body politic. My study goes considerably beyond the studies cited above, because it is not only based on extensive empirical investigation of the theme, but it does so among a particular sub set of the population- young people- who are often not afforded a voice in such deliberations.

The central methodological approach adopted has been to position Irishness through a lens supplied by young people themselves. This represents an advance on previous attempts to tackle the issue of Irish identity, which have tended not to privilege the views and attitudes of people in Ireland, young or old. The range of data employed in the current study, its complementary quantitative and qualitative character, has allowed for the generation of a complex, nuanced and textured picture of how Irishness is imagined and experienced by young people. The images of Irishness and their grounding in meaning are supplied directly by young people. There may well be a variety of meanings and sources of identity – family, media, friends – and differing understandings also have differing powers to generate and mobilize identity but the important point is that these understandings are grounded in what young people have indicated and said. Listening to what people have said and presenting their views through a systematic sociological analysis goes beyond many of the considerations of Irish identity already in the public domain. For instance, consider John Waters' characterization of contemporary Ireland:

The Peter Pan society of modern Ireland has disparaged and discarded tradition, leaving the young people with nothing to challenge them, nothing to compare themselves with, nothing to fight (2008:56).

Waters' argument would be stronger if he presented some evidence of 'The Peter Pan society' or indeed presented the voices of people endorsing this view. In fact, the research findings presented here fundamentally challenge Waters' claims – certainly young people 'disparaged and discarded' some but importantly not all traditions; young people understand challenges and they most certainly have comparative points of reference. This research extends the field of youth studies in Ireland by focusing on young people's understandings of Irish identity, allowing the voices of the current youth generation to be heard. What is also important is the contextuality of the research presented.

Though all research is context specific the particular timeframe of this research – field work conducted over the years 2002-2005 – is significant. During that period the widespread ideological endorsement of Celtic Tiger Ireland was commanding. Never before in the history of Ireland has economic activity been so intense or indeed had social change been so rapid than from the mid 1990s to the mid 2000s. My research into Irish identity was conducted at the high point of Celtic Tiger Ireland. The hegemonic discourse of Celtic Tiger Ireland emphasised something of a do-everything mentality, where achievement and success are accessible, and where

economic optimism and materialism reigned. Though the contemporary economic situation markedly differs to that of just a few short years ago, McHuge captures the optimism of those times when writing of the ‘inherent belief and trust in the fact that life will provide well for them has imbued in today’s young people a freedom of self-expression that will in most cases ensure that this will come to pass. They have come of age in a country that has come of age’ (2006:159). Certainly Ireland and Irish people looked economically successfully during the Celtic Tiger – the massive housing and redevelopment boom in Dublin or the plethora of new cars registration for instance – on the face of it indicated success (if not excess). David McWilliams popular account of *The Pope’s Children* provides a snapshot of these times with McWilliams emphasising Ireland as an “‘Expectocracy’... where people’s dreams and expectations dominate everything’ (2005:54). Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland is a very different picture of opportunity than Celtic Tiger Ireland, and some of the issues raised by my research deserve to be reconsidered. For example, it was seen that some working class ‘othering’ of immigrants was related to economic factors, but the notion of economic factors is never far from public discourse in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. An interesting future project could examine whether or not middle class people’s attitudes to immigrants have hardened because of new economic realities and whether attitudes of ‘othering’ toward immigrants have become more amplified among working class people.

Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland will certainly shape Irishness differently to Celtic Tiger Ireland, and the current research can be utilized as a benchmark by other researchers who may wish to carry out work into identity generally or Irish identity specifically. Though the paradigmatic analysis of identity presented here could be considered fragile – in that there is little evidence of consistent and deep felt mutual emotional commitment – the models presented are testable and permitting of longitudinal study. Over the next ten to twenty years, markings of Irishness could become more rigid/exclusionary or more loose and divergent. This study could be used as a point of departure for others wishing to explore changing Irish identity. Will the Tra-modern hold firm within post-Celtic Tiger Ireland and will the post-modernsinsing paradigm take on more power if people are pushed to only consider their own welfare and self-worth, never that of others? No doubt since this research was conducted additional new meanings and directions towards Irishness would have arisen for the young people researched. An attempt to re-interview participants, or engineer a new questionnaire or re-distribute the existing one, over the coming

years would shed more light on the fluidity of Irishness within particular contexts. My research was conducted in a period when young people understood themselves to have lots of opportunities, and the positivism that goes with that would have greatly coloured their understandings of identity.

Certainly there is more to do in examining the complexities of contemporary Irish identity. Why for instance are females more ready to identify with Symbols of Irishness than their male counterparts? Certainly in some respects females hold a more inclusive sense of Irishness than males. Is that underscored by a gender difference in value systems? Equally, it is clear that sports holds a central importance in mobilising Irishness, and sports are obviously gendered, but what of the role of family or friends in the promotion and/or selection of sports or what is the effect of the media in the promotion and linkage of sports with identity mobilisation? The potential avenues of further research are numerous. This study focused exclusively on young urban people in the city of Dublin. What is Irishness for the great bulk of people in Ireland who are not of school going age and not based in the capital city? How do people in their thirties, fifties or eighties view Irish identity? Is it with a similar sense of mobility and positivism that young people in Dublin expressed, or do they adhere to more traditional, less flexible notions of Irishness? Equally what difference might exist between a working class person in Cork or Belfast and a working class person in Dublin or what difference might there be between a young middle class person living and schooled in Galway and a young person living and schooled in a middle class part of Dublin?

In their study of Irish identity Fahey *et al.* point out that ‘identity is a complex matter in which nuances of meaning are many, subtle and difficult to interpret’ (2005:222). This ‘complex matter’ is evident in how young people can readily articulate understandings of Irishness occasionally implying particular rigid boundaries to Irish identity - the symbolic importance of the *Irish language* or *learning/understanding Irish history* or the significance of a Tra-modern characterisation of identity for instance - but they also demonstrate an ability, and usually a willingness, to move Irishness through different meanings. There is unquestionably an identity dynamic in operation that allows young people the space both to ground Irishness, if only temporarily, in one particular understanding but the space then to float notions of Irishness above fixed meanings, so constantly altering the meanings of Irish identity. This shifting around of the contours of identification may make it essentially impossible to securely ground Irishness

permanently within any one, fundamentally shared meaning but it also allows identity to be drawn from different sources.

Though the modern paradigm may dominant understandings and the processes of identification, young people can also appreciate elements within the post-modern and traditional paradigm to construct notions of Irish identity. That one cannot claim a specific paradigm defines an encompassing and consistently shared meaning towards Irish identity this does not then make the paradigm useless. Just because a young person may identify or see something of themselves in all the paradigms considered - or may see themselves embedded far more in one paradigm than another or of course not in any - does not invalidate the Paradigm as meaningless. Rather it points to how identity is itself displayed and negotiated across meanings rather than necessarily always within one single explanatory and fixed meaning.

John Storey, following on the work of Stuart Hall, highlights how identity is hierarchically organised but importantly shifting and contextualised:

I may be in one moment a supporter of Manchester United, at another a university professor, at another a father, and in another a friend. Each of these moments has an appropriate mode and context of articulation; that is, depending on context, our identities form particular hierarchies of the self. In particular contexts, the identity “in dominance” may be one thing, in another context it might be something quite different (2003:80).

How Storey may negotiate his own identity between being a father, a friend or a soccer supporter is also generally how young people negotiate Irish identity. Depending upon the context and demands of identity, young people can emphasise or re-emphasise various differing understandings of identity. In one particular context the idea of a modern paradigm will dominant some understandings towards Irish identity, such as with views towards rurality or religion, but when applied to the consideration of multiculturalism or immigration, understandings may alter into the traditional or the post-modern paradigm. Emphasising the complexity attendant upon identity it should be appreciated that engagement with identity is often marked by this inter-relationship:

But what will be the case is that these other nondominant identities are always present, always waiting, ready to play a part in the changing formation of the self. Therefore, in a situation where being a Manchester United supporter is my most

important identity, how I might perform this identity may well be constrained by the fact that I am still a university professor (ibid).

Though it has been seen that young people can hold different, sometime contradictory, often self-reinforcing, overlapping and indeed intermingling paradigmatic meanings, the consideration of Irishness shows young people retain some understanding of the nation. Huntington emphasizes that irrespective of how powerful cosmopolitan social elites might view their own national identity as largely irrelevant, 'most people in most countries' continue to 'identify strongly with their country' (2004:274). Young people in Dublin are essentially no different to 'most people in most countries' in holding such a strong identification towards their nation. However, unquestionably, this sense of identification is less delineated and less intense than how Irishness would have been historically understood. For instance the central Other of historical Irishness - anti-Britishness - seems to make no or very little impression upon young people understanding of who they are as Irish people.

Young people certainly see themselves as different to how others may understand Irishness if Irish identity is grounded in rigid traditional markers. Young people have an outward gaze that can draw identity from a multiplicity of sources and which can emphasise both the complexity and contextuality of identity. When Samuel Beckett forwarded 'Au contraire' to the suggestion of his Englishness young people might now be seen as suggesting an 'Irlandais mais Irlandais differeux' to suggestions of their own Irishness. Even when some young people may understand their own Irishness in fixed and rigid terms there remains some space for an accommodation of difference, reflecting the diverse reality upon the constructions of identity within contemporary Dublin.

# Appendix 1

Dear student,

Thank you very much for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. You are a member of a generation that has lived through dramatic and exciting changes in Irish society over the past ten years. For instance, Ireland now offers increased economic opportunity; unemployment is not as bad as it used to be and neither is emigration. Ireland – and Dublin in particular - is far more culturally diverse than it was 5 or 10 years ago. I am interested in how these kinds of social changes may have influenced you and your own feelings of national identity – what you personally think or what you feel it means to be an Irish person in the twenty-first century. I would appreciate if you could be as honest as possible in completing this questionnaire – IT'S NOT A TEST - it's just an attempt to gather the views of young people on Irishness – what people think it is or feel it is to be Irish. Please be as frank as possible. The research is strictly confidential. No participant or school will be identified by name in the final report.

## SECTION 1 FAMILY

1. Gender                      Male ☐      Female ☐
2. What is your age?    15 ☐                      16 ☐                      17 ☐
3. What part of Dublin (e.g. Drimnagh, Crumlin etc.) do you live in?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What country was your mother born in? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What country was your father born in? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6a. Were you born in Ireland? Yes ☐                      No ☐
- 6b. If not please specify country of birth \_\_\_\_\_

7a. To your knowledge has your mother ever lived outside of Ireland for more than six months?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7b. To your knowledge has your father ever lived outside of Ireland for more than six months?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7c. Have you ever lived outside of Ireland for more than six months?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7d. If yes, do you remember this experience?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8a. Have you family members (such as mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousins) who were born in Ireland but are living outside of Ireland?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8b. If yes, in which countries are these relatives mostly living in?

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8c. Have you family members (such as brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousins) who were not born in Ireland and are living outside of Ireland?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8d. If yes, in which countries are these relatives mostly living in?

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9a. In the future do you think you might live outside Ireland for at least 6 months?

Yes ☐ No ☐

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9b. If yes, where do you think you might live?

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9c. Please give at least one reason as to why you might live abroad for at least 6 months?

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10a. Do your parent(s) work outside the home?

Mother - Yes ☐ No ☐

Father - Yes ☐ No ☐

10b. Are you employed outside the home during your school year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

10c. If yes, what type of work are you engage in

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10d. What are the main reasons why you work?

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## **SECTION 3 FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS**

11a. Have you any friend(s) who was not born in Ireland?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11b. Have you any friend whose parent(s) were not born in Ireland?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12. Are you likely to spend most of your free time (your time outside of school and work) with friends?

Yes ☐ No ☐

13a. Are your friends mainly the people you know from school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

13b. Are you friends mainly people who you do not go to school with?

Yes ☐ No ☐

14. How many people would be in your core group of friends?

15a. Would you actively avoid forming a friendship with someone not born in Ireland?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15b. Would you actively avoid forming a friendship with someone from an ethnic minority?

Yes ☐ No ☐

## **SECTION 2 SYMBOLISMS**

16. People very often rely on symbols in trying to sum up the difficult question of what is national identity. In this section you are offered a listing of symbols that some people might think and feel are important in expressing something about Irishness. You are asked to identify particular symbols you think ***OTHER PEOPLE*** – your family, friends, Irish or non-Irish people etc. - might regard as a very important, important or not important characteristic about Irishness. You are also asked ***WHAT YOU*** generally regard as an important, not important or very important symbol that expressing something Irish for you personally.

***Symbols of Irishness For Other People***

Very Not  
Important Important

***For me***

Very Not  
Important Important

	VERY	IMPO	NOT		VERY	IMPO	NOT
Symbols of Irishness							
GAA							
Irish soccer team							
U2							
Classic Irish literature (e.g. Joyce)							
Celtic Tiger							
Multiculturalism							
Alcoholic abuse							
Welcoming to strangers							
Irish language							
The craic							
Intolerance							
Repression							
Speaking the Irish language							
Violent							
The government							
Political corruption							
Learning/understanding Irish History							
Irish folk music							
Friendliness/helpfulness							
Riverdance							
Catholic church							
Spirituality – or beliefs in god							
Physically/geographically Mobility							
Well educated							
Creative, artistic and talented							
Socially co-operative and helpful							
Saint Patrick's Day							
Other							

If other please explain

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## **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

17. Please list your three favourite leisure activities (going to the movies, shopping, playing sport, reading, watching TV, internet, gaming etc.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

18a. If you watch Television, please list your three favourite programmes

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

18b. Which three television channels do you watch the most (RTE, BBC, etc.)

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

19. If you listen to music, please indicate your three favourite artists/bands

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

20. Please indicate what you are most likely to shop for and how often?

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21. Would you like your school to encourage more teaching about cultures other than Irish culture?

Yes ☐ No ☐

22a. When you finish secondary school will you continue with further education?

Yes ☐ No ☐

22b. Will your further education most likely be continued at which of the following,

University ☐

Institute of Technology ☐

FAS course/training programme ☐

Other training programme (such as army, Aer Lingus) ☐

If other please explain

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22c. Is there any particular reason(s) why you would not continue with further education when you finish secondary school?

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23. When you finish school or college do you know what occupation you would like to work in? Is there any particular reason?

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24. It is often said that young people need positive role models; people whom they look up to, whose achievements provide inspiration for others. Who do you consider a role model and why?

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25. If you had the power to change one thing about Irish society, what would you change and why?

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26. Having just completed the questionnaire is there anything now that you think is important in showing Irishness and why?

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*Thank you*

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# Appendix 2

## **Summary Of School Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaires were sent out over the 2002-03 school year to a variety of different schools located on the Southside of Dublin. 10 different secondary schools participated in completing and returning the questionnaires. A wide variety of schools are represented in the research. Some schools are single sex while some are mixed schools, and although most of the schools are state-funded secondary schools some are private secondary schools. An assorted geographical mix is obvious from the returned questionnaires. About 35 different areas of south Dublin, like Crumlin, Drimnagh, Lucan, Blackrock, Dundrum etc – are represented with some respondents coming from as far as Kildare and Wicklow to attend schools in Dublin. The breakdowns of the results are as follows.

## **Family Networks**

312 people answered the questionnaire of which 139 are male and the remaining 173 female. The overwhelming majority of respondents were aged between 15-16 - 93% - with the remaining 7% of people aged 14, 17 or other. The majority of people were born in Ireland – 93% - with the remaining pupils being born outside Ireland. England is the mostly likely place non-Irish born pupils would have been born. Even though only 7% of pupils were not born in Ireland many more pupils had a father or mother whose place of birth was outside Ireland. 11.5% of pupils have a non-Irish born mother – again England is the most likely place of birth – and nearly 14% of pupils have a non-Irish born father, once again England is the mostly likely place father would have been born. England also was by far the most likely place people would have relatives – nearly half of all the pupils have relatives in England. A majority of pupils – some 73% - of the entire pupil sample have some Irish-born family member – brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts etc. - living abroad in well over 50 different countries. When it comes to relatives living abroad who were not born in Ireland a large proportion of pupils – 45% of those who answered the question - have some family connections living abroad. As can be seen from the table below England is once again – with 24% - the most common place that pupils would have not-Irish born family living.

***Table 1 Family Networks***

<b>Country</b>	<b>% Of the pupils sampled who have an Irish born family member living in</b>	<b>% Of the pupils sampled who have a non-Irish born family member living in</b>
<b>England</b>	45%	24%
<b>USA</b>	26%	12%
<b>Australia</b>	21%	9%
<b>Canada</b>	10%	4%

79% of the entire sample indicated that they wanted to leave Ireland for at least 6 months. The top 4 intended destination were

***Table 2 Countries pupils most wanted to live in***

<b><u>Country</u></b>	<b>% Of the entire pupils sampled who wanted to live in a certain countries for at least 6 months</b>
<b>USA</b>	46%
<b>Australia</b>	22%
<b>England</b>	14%
<b>Spain</b>	11%

Though people gave various reasons for wanting to live outside Ireland the most common reason to travel and live in another country was for the experience of another culture or way of life. 52% of pupils offered this reason. Pupils also wanted to travel because they saw employment or college opportunities abroad – 27% - and some 14% of pupils wanted to travel because the weather was better. Other reasons for travelling abroad for at least 6 months included meeting family members living abroad, or just to enjoy a break from Ireland. A clear distinction exists between male and female pupils in wanting to live outside Ireland for at least 6 months. The overwhelming majority of females – at 87% - want to leave Ireland for at least 6 months while the figure for male pupils at 72%, though still a very convincing majority is much lower than the female figure. Another distinction exists between pupils from affluent districts – places like Blackrock or Foxrock - and less affluent parts of Dublin – areas like Drimnagh and Crumlin for instance. 90% of pupils from affluent areas wish to spend at least 6 months outside of Ireland as compared to 78% of pupils from less affluent parts of Dublin.

### **Employment**

Most pupils have both their parents working outside the home - 65% of mothers and 92% of fathers work outside the home. Of the pupils sampled some 40% have some kind of employment outside their home. Of this 40% who work, female pupils are just slightly more likely to work than male pupils. While 35% of male pupils sampled work the corresponding figure for female pupils stands at 42%. Pupils are most likely to work as sales assistants or as bar staff – this makes up 65% of the work done by pupils. People often gave more than one reason for working but the most likely reason for working was to get money - the reason for just 90% of the people who worked. Other reasons for working included experience, meeting people, work offered some independence from parents, confidence, an interest in the area of employment, enjoyment, or some pupils worked simply for something to do. Pupils from affluent parts of Dublin as less likely to work outside the home than pupils from less affluent parts of Dublin – 42% compared to the employment rate from pupils from affluent parts of Dublin at 25%. There are also some geographical variations in the occupations carried out by pupils. Not one single person from an

affluent area in Dublin worked in the Bar Trade while for people from less affluent parts Bar Trade employment made up 47% of all work carried out by pupils.

### **Symbolisms**

The questionnaire asked pupils to consider a certain mixture of symbols often identified with Irishness. Also included were newer symbols that some people suggest are increasingly important in explaining Irishness. Pupils were asked to consider two different perspectives about these symbols. Firstly from the perspective of what other people might think - the *other people* implied pupils friends and family, or other Irish and non-Irish peoples. The second perspective was their own individual assessment of each of the symbol's importance to themselves. Pupils ranked 3 different choices about each symbol, that it was very important, important or not important, the results are below.

Table 3 Irishness Symbolisms Ranked

<b><i>SYMBOLS OF IRISHNESS</i></b>	<b><i>Very important to me</i></b>	<b><i>Very important to other people</i></b>	<b><i>Important to me</i></b>	<b><i>Important to other people</i></b>	<b><i>Not important to me</i></b>	<b><i>Not important t to other people</i></b>
<b><i>FRIENDLINESS/ HELPFUL</i></b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>61.3%</b>	<b>27.8%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
<b><i>WELL EDUCATED</i></b>	<b>64.8%</b>	<b>58.3%</b>	<b>27.8%</b>	<b>33.2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>
<b><i>ST PATRICKS DAY</i></b>	<b>63.5%</b>	<b>69.7%</b>	<b>27.4%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
<b><i>THE CRAIC</i></b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>63.3%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>
<b><i>CREATIVE, ARTISTIC AND TALENTED</i></b>	<b>54.2%</b>	<b>39.9%</b>	<b>32.7%</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b><i>IRISH SOCCER TEAM</i></b>	<b>52.5%</b>	<b>62.7%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>29.9%</b>	<b>19.7%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
<b><i>SOCIALLY CO- OPERATIVE AND HELPFUL</i></b>	<b>52.1%</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>

<b><i>LEARNING/ UNDERSTANDI NG IRISH HISTORY</i></b>	<b>49.6%</b>	<b>45.2%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>18.3%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>
<b><i>IRISH LANGUAGE</i></b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>42.5%</b>	<b>27.9%</b>	<b>36.5%</b>	<b>27.9%</b>	<b>21.1%</b>
<b><i>WELCOMING TO STRANGERS</i></b>	<b>41.4%</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>40.4%</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>15.3%</b>
<b><i>SPEAKING THE IRISH LANGUAGE</i></b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>37.1%</b>	<b>40.1%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>
<b><i>CATHOLIC CHURCH</i></b>	<b>28.6%</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>44.6%</b>	<b>21.6%</b>
<b><i>U2</i></b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>45.2%</b>	<b>40.6%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>
<b><i>IRISH FOLK MUSIC</i></b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>31.2%</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>41.8%</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b><i>CELTIC TIGER</i></b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>46.8%</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>42.3%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>
<b><i>SPIRITUALITY – OR BELIEFS IN GOD</i></b>	<b>26.1%</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>	<b>40.4%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>
<b><i>MULTI- CULTURALISM</i></b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>	<b>41.5%</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>32.1%</b>	<b>27.4%</b>
<b><i>IRISH LITERATURE</i></b>	<b>25.8%</b>	<b>30.5%</b>	<b>33.7%</b>	<b>47.3%</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>22.2%</b>
<b><i>GAA</i></b>	<b>25.1%</b>	<b>44.4%</b>	<b>36.6%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>12%</b>

<b>THE GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>33.7%</b>	<b>41.5%</b>	<b>40.4%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>25.3%</b>
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<b>CORRUPTION</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>34.5%</b>
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As can be seen from the results there can be a large distance between what other people are considered to hold as very important, important or not important, and what the pupils themselves claim to value.

### **Leisure Activities**

A wide range of leisure activities were listed by the pupils, from hill walking to swimming, to arts and crafts or writing poetry to Irish dancing. This is hardly surprisingly given not only that pupils had the option of listing their three favourite leisure activities but that the alternative ways to spend your free time – gaming, the internet, sports, TV etc. - are varied. The dominant favoured pastime proved to be the shopping – with slightly over 49% of people listing it as a favoured leisure activity. Next after shopping was going to the cinema – at 47% - then came watching TV – which 41% of pupils listed as a favourite activity. Socialising with friends came in next with a listing of 25%. Certain leisure activities showed a clear gender division. Shopping for instance is listed by 69% of all females while only 4% of males list shopping as a favourite activity. Female pupils also dominated in other leisure activities like reading, going to the cinema and socialising with friends – 31% of females listed socialising with friends as one of their favourite leisure activities while for the male pupils the figure was a much lower 11%. Male students have more of a preference for playing and listening to music than female pupils and for playing and watching sport. Males were also more likely to watch TV – 46% of all males as compared to 35% of females – and gaming as a listed leisure activity was dominated by male pupils – 91% of all people who listed gaming as a favourite leisure activity are males.

### **Television**

When asked to list their 3 favourite television shows the number of different shows exceeded 140, showing that the pupils have very diverse tastes. Certain shows proved far more popular than others, and indeed many programmes only got 1 pupil mentioning them – Five Go Dating, One on One, Real World, Dismissed, Top Gear - over 25 different shows only got 1 single preference. The Simpsons was the most watched TV programme at 38.5% but was followed very closely by Friends at 37%, next came Eastenders at just 24%. After these 3 programmes no other programme manages to get over 20% of the sample, the closest is Coronation Street at 15%. Some tastes show a clear bias in gender – of the 5 people who listed Hollyoaks as a favourite TV programme all are female. Soap programmes appear very popular with female pupils – 90% of all the people who watch Eastenders and 89% of the people who watch Coronation Street are females. Female pupils also dominate the viewing of Sex In The City, of the 6% of the entire sample who listed Sex In The City as one of their favourite programmes the overwhelming majority are female. Male students dominant the viewing of certain sports programmes – like the different soccer programmes – and for programmes like Jackass – 88% of the sample that watch

this are male. 71% of the people who watch South Park and 66% of the people who watch The Simpsons are males.

There is a clear preference for North American television programmes with 83% of all people watching at least one, but sometimes 3 programmes that originate in North America. A majority of people – 55% - also list at least 1 British programme as one of their favoured TV shows and slightly under 10% list an Irish programme in their favourites – Father Ted and Fair City dominate in this category. Perhaps what best demonstrates the revolution in broadcasting in the last 10-20 years in Ireland is the station viewing habits of pupils. When asked to list their 3 favourite TV station – like RTE 1, Network 2, Channel 4 or MTV - the dominant response was a satellite or digital channel. Satellite and digital – which would not have been in anyway widely available when the pupils were even born – has the preference of 87% of the entire sample. The RTE channels were next favoured – with 37% listing one of RTE's channels, then came the BBC – with some 24% - which was followed by the British commercial channels like Channel 4 or UTV which were watched by 24% of the sample. The only southern Irish commercial TV channel - TV3 – was listed by 17% of the entire sample.

### **Music**

Turning to music, the question was asked that pupils list their three favourite artists/bands. As with television programmes a very wide range of musical tastes comes through from the sample, artists ranging from Aslan, Nirvana, Jimi Hendrix, Jennifer Lopez, Robbie Williams, Greenday, Scooter, Snoop Dogg, and Christy Moore to The Beatles. Because the responses were very varied I simplified musical preference into recognised musical categories rather than artists. The categories used were, rock, emo, indie, rnb, hip-hop, pop, dance, Irish traditional and other. The 3 main categories of music that dominate what pupils listen to are - rock (60%), hip-hop (35%) and pop (33%). Males are far more likely to listen to rock than females, with 72% of males as compared to 51% of females listing a rock band as one of their three favourite artists. Unsurprisingly the most popular chart artists' dominate – bands like Red Hot Chilli Peppers, U2, and Metallica. Like rock, hip-hop has a bias in favour of males pupils with nearly 40% of all males listing a hiphop artist – Eminem was by far the most common artists listed irrespective of gender – as compared to 31% of females who listed a hip-hop artists as one of their favourite musical acts. An interesting distinction about hiphop is that if you live in Crumlin or Palmerstown you are much more likely to listen to hip-hop than if you lived in more affluent parts of Dublin like Blackrock, Knocklyon or Dalkey where rock music is more favoured. A musical category that has a very clear gender division is rnb – with only one male pupil or less than 1% of all the male pupils listing an rnb artists as one of their favourite musical acts. This compares to 28 females, or nearly 17%, who list an rnb artists as one of their favourites. Perhaps unsurprisingly another clear-cut gender division within musical tastes comes with pop music – bands like Blue, Westlife, and Garth Gates etc. Though pop music makes up 33% of people's musical preference nearly 97% of this figure is made up of females.

### **Education**

A clear majority of pupils appear to value further education after the completion of secondary school. University was the favoured option of 58% of the pupils and females favoured the university option – 78% wishing to go onto University – as compared with nearly 52% of male pupils. Males dominated in wanting apprenticeships - 10% would like to do an apprenticeship in

certain trades or join the army and some the air corps. One of the Institute's of Technology is favoured by just over 6% of people and a FAS scheme by just under 5% of people.

The response to the question, Would you like your school to encourage more teaching about cultures other than Irish culture? Showed a majority of pupils – 58% - want their schools to offer teaching on other cultures. Female pupils are far more open to the idea of teaching about other cultures with 68% supporting the idea as compared to 50% of males. The pupils who either have a non-Irish born parent or who where themselves born outside Ireland, showed a clear preference for the teaching of other cultures; 79% of pupils with an mother born abroad, 66% of pupils with a father born outside Ireland and 81% of students not born in Ireland would like their school to encourage the teaching of other cultures.

### **Future Occupation**

In asking pupils about future occupation I collapsed the pupils responses into what sociologists consider a simplified occupational stratification system. What this means is that someone who lists a mechanic or carpenter as their hoped-for future occupation is placed in a skilled-manual category while someone who lists doctor or solicitor as they hoped for future occupation is listed as a professional. Of the pupils who answered the question a majority - 61% - favoured a future professional occupation - these included solicitors, accountants, architects, designers, IT related occupations, doctors or nurses and teaching – 8% of pupils would like to work in the teaching profession and just 85% who listed teaching of some form are female. Of the people listing a professional occupation 66% are female and the remaining 34% male.

Slightly over 11% of people listed a skilled manual occupation as their desired future occupation – such as a mechanic, electrician, carpenter or plasterer. Perhaps as some skilled manual occupations are still considered male preserves it is unsurprising that within this category male pupils make-up 79% of those who want to pursue a skilled manual occupation. A similar gender divide emerges with the 11% of pupils who listed a service occupation – like beautian or hairdressing – as there preferred future occupation as female's make-up 88% of this category.

As well as collapsing occupation categories into skilled manual, professional or service I also highlighted the pupils that wanted to pursue an occupation in the care industries – such as medicine related, social workers or the caring for children with special needs. What comes through strongly is that females are far more likely to identity themselves in the caring area than males. 49 people listed some element of caring within their choice of occupation of which 86% are females. Of the 17 people who listed money as a motivation for choosing a certain occupation, 14 – or 82% - are male pupils. I also highlighted certain occupations as artistic – designing, music – including production or performing, journalism etc. – of the people listing an artistic occupation 69% are females. Just 13% of pupils did not know what they might want to work at in the future.

### **Role Models**

The question was asked, Who do you consider a role model and why? A slight majority of pupils listed a role model who is not in the public eye – people such as family, friends or teachers. Slightly fewer than 40% of the pupils who answered the question about role models listed a family member as their role model. Females though are far more likely to consider a family member a role model than are male pupils – overall 53% of females list a family member but with males it is slightly under 20%. The most popular role model after a family member was an international music figure, which received 16% of all responses. The personalities were very

diverse from Tupac and Eminem to members of Metallica to Chris Cornell founding member of Soundgarden but probably best known now as lead singer with Audioslave. Just over 3% of people listed an Irish music artist as their role model and Bono was the most popular choice – with many people commenting upon and commending his charity work. Irish sports figures were more popular than Irish musical figures with just under 8% of pupils listing some Irish sport figure. Roy Keane was by far the most popular – many pupils admired his honesty towards the FAI – then Brian O’Driscoll, who was admired for his rugby ability. The most popular Irish historical figure was Michael Collins and the most popular international historical figure was Martin Luther King.

### **The power to change one thing about Irish society**

When asked if there was one thing about Irish society that the pupils would like to change many different answers emerged. The most common thing pupils would like to change was racism with over 21% listing this as a problem they would like to get rid of. After racism the thing most pupils would like to change would be certain anti-social behaviour like unprovoked violence on the streets, or certain anti-social problems associated with drug misuse. Slightly over 10% of pupils listed this as wishing it would change and a similar figure – 10.3% – also listed the government as needing to change. Many different answers were offered on wanting to remove the government – misuse of public funds and corruption to the use of Shannon as a military stopover for USA combat troops. Slightly fewer than 10% of pupils felt Ireland had drinking problems that they would address and change and just fewer than 10% of pupils would like homelessness addressed. 6.6% of pupils would like the Irish language to be more commonly spoken but 4.6% of people listed removing Irish from the school curriculum as a thing they would change if they had the power. Other things that would change included the 3% of pupils who said they would do something about the problems in the north of Ireland and 3% of pupils who would make Ireland a friendlier place for all and the nearly 2% who said they would do something about improving the environment.

### **Overview**

As can be seen from the research pupils can be placed in a globalised environment – many have family connections outside Ireland. Many pupils have had either or both their parents live abroad for at least six months – 26% of mothers and 34% of fathers have lived outside Ireland for at least six months – and many have parents whose place of birth is also outside Ireland. Many pupils hope in the future to explore and investigate different cultures outside Ireland with some 79% of pupils indicating they would like to spend at least 6 months outside Ireland at some future date. We can see from the preference in musical and television tastes that the overwhelming majority of pupils are attached to international TV programmes and international music stars – the only consistently popular Irish musical figures to be represented in the research are U2 and Westlife – both of them very successful international music performers – would they be as popular with the pupils if they were not internationally successful? Though the research is not an exhaustive examination into Dublin based pupils attitudes or lifestyles, it is hoped that the research can be built upon and allow a greater understanding about young people’s identity and how it is shaped in their teenage years.

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# Appendix 3

What we going to try and consider today is what it means for you people to be Irish. Asking you what it is to be Irish may seem easy and straight-forward but when people usually start thinking about their national identity it's often a very difficult thing to start expressing your feelings about. I hope the questions are not too abstract and if something needs explaining just ask. A lot of the questions have come from responses to a questionnaire that I have been distributing to schools for about 18 months, so these are questions that in many ways have come from people your own age group and sharing similar circumstances. What I need today is your honest views about what you feel it is like to be Irish. Whatever is said is totally confidential and no person will in any way be identifiable in the finished research, I won't be approaching anybody's teachers or parents, so please speak your mind.

## **Self-perception of national worth**

Younger people seem to have positive images of being Irish – it's about being friendly, creative, being well educated about enjoying the craic – would you people share these positive views about being Irish?

Ireland – unlike a lot of other European countries – consistently has people responding that they are proud of being Irish? When was the last time you can particular remember feeling proud of being Irish? Was it at some sports event or a music event?

People do seem to feel its very important to be proud to be Irish so how would people feel if being Irish was strongly associated with really negative things? Like the Irish being stupid, racists, sectarian, very violent?

David Trimble quote

"pathetic, mono-ethnic and mono-cultural state".

Do you feel this characterises the Irish?

How do react to criticism of the Irish?

Is there a difference between a Irish and non-Irish critical source?

A comment from the questionnaire that came from a non-Irish person in a Dublin secondary school who say, 'I think the Irish think everyone thinks they're great "craic" (not true), very friendly (nonsense) and are heavy drinkers (nothing to be proud of...)' (qq331), what do you feel about this person's assessment of the Irish?

Do you think its matters what other nationalities think of the Irish?

Dose anyone here have any negative feelings about being Irish? Is there something you would change about Irish society?

## **Being Irish**

Do you think that being Irish in Dublin differs from being Irish in Limerick, Belfast, Cork or any place outside Dublin?

Have you much contact with non-Dublin Irish people – like visiting relatives in Cork or friends from Kilkenny?

Have you'se travelled much around Ireland?

Do you think that in Dublin there can be variations in being Irish, like Tallaght is more Irish that Drimagh or Foxrock?

Do you think that being Irish is the same today as it was maybe 100 years ago?

Do you think you have a different view of being Irish than your parents or from people just who are older than yourselves?

What about people younger than yourselves – like kids in primary school - do you think they view being Irish differently than yourselves?

Does anybody feel their own feelings of being Irish has changed over the last few years?

What about your friends do you think they have changed any of their views about being Irish?

Do you think your views on being Irish will change in the future?

## **Markers of Irishness**

A commend on the questionnaire stated, “That we should speak Irish. I feel we need to be speaking our national language. I would feel more Irish” (qq138) do people share this view that if you spoke Irish you may feel more Irish?

Another person on the questionnaire stated ‘ I would create [a] more Irish speaking society and make it compulurary for secondary kids to go once a year’, do people think this would be an extreme approach?

What do you do with a person like me who never liked Irish – and was excused learning Irish at school - do you make people like me go to these Irish schools?

Do you think that maybe playing Gaelic sport or playing traditional music makes you feel more Irish than playing soccer or rugby or listening to hip hop?

Another comment on the questionnaire says, 'Keep the language, keep the music and don't get caught up in the industrialized world, where nothing but money matters' (qq17). Would people like to live in such an Ireland?

Sports are usually very important for young people. From the questionnaire results over 80% of people thought supporting the Irish soccer team was either important or very important to them in expressing a sense of Irishness, do you feel supporting the soccer team is this important?

Is it only certain sports that are important? Like it would be more important to win the World Cup in soccer or rugby than winning a gold medal in show jumping?

## **Globalisation**

Do people feel you have to be born in Ireland to be Irish?

What is your impression of those groupings – like Irish-Americans or people in Britain born of Irish ancestry – how Irish are they?

What is making them Irish do you think?

Another comment from the questionnaire stated how a person wanted '... less cultures in Ireland' (qq87), how do people feel about the idea of a multi-cultural Ireland?

In all probability you all listen to music and watch TV programmes that are not made for an explicitly Irish audience, do you feel if you only listen to American music or only watched British TV, you could be somehow less Irish?

Have you travelled much abroad?

Do you think being in a foreign environment affects your sense of Irishness?

From the questionnaire result nearly 75% of people wanted to live outside Ireland for at least 6 months? What about yourself do any of you want to live abroad for at least 6 months?

Do people feel that Swedes or English people would consider being Irish as a positive or as a negative thing?

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